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The Postmodern Project in History

UCLA Historical Journal

VOLUME 15 1995

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Published annually. Subscriptions are $12 per year for institutions, $7 for individuals. Single issues may be ordered at the same prices. For orders outside the United States, please add $3. All orders must be prepaid and sent to the *UCLA Historical Journal*, Department of History, University of California, Box 951473, Los Angeles, California 90095-1473.

The deadline for receipt of manuscripts is April 1, but early submission is strongly advised. All submitted work should be double-spaced, including footnotes. For questions of style, consult the University of Chicago *Manual of Style* or Kate Turabian *A Manual for Writers of Term Papers, Theses and Dissertations*. Manuscripts, including footnotes, should be no more than 40 pages in length. Because submissions are evaluated anonymously, the author's name should appear only on the title page.

Partially funded by UCLA Graduate Students Association.

ISSN: 0276-864X

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Front cover: "Venice Reconstituted," 1989. Detail of mural in Venice, California, by artist Rip Cronk sponsored by the Social and Public Art Resource Center (SPARC), Great Walls Unlimited: Neighborhood Pride mural program.

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Acknowledgments

We are very pleased to present this fifteenth volume of the UCLA Historical Journal, which is dedicated to an exploration of "The Postmodern Project in History." The material presented in this issue reflects some of the very intriguing ways that history graduate students are attempting to integrate into their own work the complex and controversial critiques developed by recent theorists.

This has been a very stimulating and sometimes difficult task, and we would like to thank all the people who have helped bring it to a successful conclusion. Our editors and reviewers have devoted a great deal of energy, effort, and insight into a formidable topic. In particular, Donna Binckewiez, Gregory Beyrer, Connie Chen, Anastasia Christman-Simmons, Elizabeth Covington, Elyssa Faison, Joan J. Johnson, Jennifer Koslow, Lisa Materson, and Gregory Vanderbilt were consistently engaged, astute, and cheerful about volunteering their valuable time. This issue's intellectual geneology was a special program sponsored by the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation under the direction of Professor Joyce Appleby. Several of the papers included in this issue resulted directly from that experience, while various others of the editors and reviewers benefitted from their own participation. In addition, we would like to thank Professor Ronald Mellor, Chair of the History Department, for his consistent encouragement and support of the Journal.

The issue was designed and produced by Brenda Johnson-Grau, whose patience and skill has once again helped us through the production process. Joseph R. Plummer, director of UCLA Graduate Student Publications, has also been a reliable source of advice as well as financial support. Finally, we would like to express our appreciation to all those others who have helped in innumerable ways to make the Journal a publication with which we can be proud to have been associated.

— Rebecca J. Mead
Allison L. Sneider

Introduction: The Postmodern Project in History

Rebecca J. Mead
Allison L. Sneider

This volume of the *UCLA Historical Journal*, on "The Postmodern Project in History," is the third that addresses a special topic in order to highlight an important issue of interest to today's historians. The essays in this volume should help clarify some of the prominent ideas and terms, but they certainly do not begin to address all of the relevant issues. Many historians find postmodernism intimidating, in no small part because of the difficulty of the texts themselves. Others resist an interpretation that seems to reduce or negate the importance of material circumstances as causal factors. Part of the problem arises from the fact that many different and sometimes competing schools of thought are grouped under the term "postmodernist," thus obscuring their variations and leading to overarching assumptions that many of the practitioners themselves reject. The word "postmodernism" itself covers a variety of different ideas and theories, but a consistent theme is an emphasis on language and its constitutive power. In our view, this approach does not eliminate the need for other types of analyses, but rather allows for a more sophisticated way to look at how different historical actors shape, and are shaped by, their world views. With this issue we have made an effort to demystify postmodernism and show how it can help illuminate the dynamics relevant to specific historical problems.

As editors, it has been interesting to us that while our call for papers requested articles explicitly addressing the question of historical research and postmodern theory broadly defined, the majority of articles we received were devoted to the possibilities and limitations of the conceptual apparatus and theoretical constructs of Michel Foucault. The fact that Foucault receives so much attention, both positive and negative, hints at the salience of his ideas to

historians concerned with how relations of power are constructed and perpetuated in people's minds and in their lives. Foucault's work, which is more historical than that of most postmodern theorists, reflects his own debt to Friedrich Nietzsche in emphasizing that truth claims based on supposedly objective knowledge are actually human inventions that disguise the operations of power. Rather than a smooth, diachronous, causal process, human history reflects the discontinous but reciprocal nature of power and knowledge. Foucault's most famous works, including *Discipline and Punish* and the multivolume *The History of Sexuality* demonstrate how the ubiquitous nature of power actively creates and defines subjects for study. The resultant forms of knowledge then operate to further reinforce and legitimate those systems of power relations by creating institutions and professions that objectify and reduce other human beings to the status of "subjects." Residual illusions of shared humanity among subjects are destroyed by isolation, individualization, evaluation, and eventually by internalized self-discipline. The capacity to judge others, to make truth claims about them, is a terrifyingly potent form of power and control over others. Foucault's insistent focus on human bodies demonstrates that the very idea of "man"—not simply human habits, licit or otherwise—is constructed by manifestations of this dynamic.

Because of his attention to powerful knowledge structures with significant real-life consequences—not to mention scholarly complicity in the process—it is not surprising the many of the authors in this special issue address the Foucauldian formulation. As graduate students with diverse intellectual backgrounds and research agendas in the fields of European, United States, Middle East and Chinese history, these authors analyze both practical and conceptual issues raised by Foucault's work, postmodern theory, and the practice of history. The first article in this issue, written by J.B. Shank, assesses postmodern critiques of the Enlightenment project as too rationalistic, universalistic, and overfond of binary oppositions. Suggesting that postmodern thinkers fundamentally misread the Enlightenment when they locate within it the "root of our current dualistic pathology," Shank attacks the postmodern notion of a "totalitarian Enlightenment" through a close reading of the work of French philosopher Denis Diderot. Arguing that Diderot shares with postmodern thinkers a profound opposition to dualistic rationalism, and that Diderot specifically, and the French Enlightenment more generally, must be understood as "an ancestor of much postmodern discourse," Shank's essay raises important questions about how we define modernity, and the problems associated with uncritically accepting the definition of modernity promoted by its postmodern critics.

Articles by Michael Latham and Jasamin Rostam-Kolayi return our atten-

tion to the issues raised by using Foucault's historical work as a model for historical inquiry. Inspired by Foucault's conception of "power/knowledge," Latham explores the possibilities of this perspective as an aid to understanding the emergence and impact of modernization theory on public policy in the United States after World War Two. Latham begins with the question of why modernization theory remained such a powerful paradigm for the understanding of international development despite sustained assaults on its intellectual foundations from both the academic left and right. Using Foucault's "archaeological" method to dig deeply into the foundational principles of modernization theory, Latham is able to argue that its longevity lies less in the fact that its proponents were right than because the language of modernization theory was part of an "episteme," or knowledge system, with deep roots in the Enlightenment. Drawing on "unconscious yet essential discursive rules . . . that make particular types of knowledge possible," Latham links modernization theory's success to "a long-standing discursive pattern of social analysis based on the concept of progress." While Latham finds Foucault's archaeological method useful, he remains critical of the "epistemic" conception of historical change as a profoundly revolutionary "rupture" because it is unable to help him construct a causal explanation with any historical specificity.

Rostam-Kolayi shares Latham's frustrations with Foucault more than his enthusiasm. In her work on women writers in early twentieth-century Iran, Rostam-Kolayi is interested in locating the roots of women's resistance to, and cooperation with, multiple projects of nationalism, modernization, and secularism. Her interest in women's collective activism and individual women's agency signals a deep concern with the postmodern dismissal of the subject and the inability of those working within an "epistemic" framework to identify the origins of oppositional politics. Rather than reclaim the modernist subject, however, Rostam-Kolayi suggests that historians focus their work on efforts to redefine subjectivity, which in the Iranian context can include both nationalist and women's movements. Rostam-Kolayi's work represents a middle position in which postmodern critiques of the universal subject are integrated with historical questions that still recognize individual actors. Thus Rostam-Kolayi's essay addresses both the important question of how Iranian women acted to define their subjectivity at different historical moments, as well as the specific content and force of individual women's writings.

The issue of subjectivity and individual agency also arises in the "conversation" between Elizabeth Covington and Elizabeth Townsend, in which they discuss biography as a postmodern methodology. Covington is working on the life of the nineteenth-century French novelist Rachilde; Townsend's project fo-

cuses on the twentieth-century writer and pacifist Vera Brittain. For Townsend, biography remains fundamentally a modernist project, its form and meaning "dictated by its subject," and its larger purpose "to illuminate a common humanity." For Covington, biography can be entirely different, serving as a means to isolate "ideas dominant in collective thought," in which the individual is de-empahsized in order to listen to the discourses speaking through her. This wide-ranging diaologue between two historians attempting to explain their visions of biography to each other vividly demonstrates what it can mean to take the "linguistic turn."

Articles by Eugenia Lean and Tamara Zwick address issues of truth, objectivity, authenticity, and the production of meaning. Lean's essay explores the link between Chinese modernization in the early twentieth century and the selling of western medical science in the Chinese press. Arguing that modern medicine and scientific discourse acted to shape and define new cultural elites, Lean's work, like Latham's, documents the "constituting power of historical discourses," while acknowledging her intellectual debt to poststructuralist thinking about the power of language to shape material reality. Lean also reflects concerns raised by such postocolonial critics as Edward Said who question the extent to which western epistemic systems were accepted by non-western cultures or were imperialist impositions. Her essay reflects the need for careful definition of concepts such as "science" and "gender" under specific historical and regional circumstances, as well as sensitivity to the ways that western paradigms were often modified in the process of their adaptation into other, nonwestern, epistemes.

Zwick's study of preservation efforts at the site of the concentration camp Aushwitz-Birkenau also engages the question of how "truth" is produced. Zwick's essay explores the ways in which the "truth" of Auschwitz-Birkenau is "multivocal." The site is one of historical catastrophe and holocaust, yet it is also also a part of the daily lives of the Polish Catholics who live in Oswiecim as well as a convent, a museum, and a cemetery. As a decaying architectural structure, Auschwitz-Birkenau is also a material artifact, a relic of the past endowed with a certain "authenticity," or intrinisc truth value, by the museum curators, religious leaders, and state officials who have invested in its preservation, and by the host of visitors who make a "pilgrimage" to the site every year. For Zwick, however, this truth is ultimately a construction, selectively conceived and preserved.

What then does postmodernism offer historians: "powerful" new insights or nihilistic relativism? If we (the editors as historians) really believed the latter, we would find another line of work. Instead, we are not disturbed by the idea

that history is always a partial, limited reconstruction because we are interested in precisely the questions that give it significance. How *do* people invest their experiences with meaning? How do words and ideas connect to material circumstances and objects? What does it mean if conceptual value is created, rather than absolute? These are some of the questions people ask, often with hostility, thinking that "deconstructing" these meanings too far will lead into a nihilist void that precludes positive action. We contend, however, that what can be deconstructed can be reconstructed: that the strength of these ideas lies precisely in the recognition that human beings are not completely bound by any "natural" and inescapable essentialisms, but that within their specific historical conditions they have the freedom to challenge existing interpretations and create new ones.

Instead, we believe that postmodernist theory forces us to remember several key points. First, history is both an interpretive and an empirical discipline. Events such as war and genocide really do happen, resulting in death and destruction, but the meanings of those actions vary for the actors as well as for their interpreters. While subsequent historians can try to piece together those significances in order to approach a broader understanding of how things occur, the achievement of an absolute, objective "Truth" is probably impossible. Is it really necessary, however, when explanations can acquire power and resonance through their increasingly comprehensive sophistication? Second, this difficulty is compounded by the fact that we deal with incomplete evidential traces largely in the form of texts that are inevitably interpreted within the specific historical contexts of the interpreters. Historians do try to present their material in good faith, but beyond watching for and restraining their own biases, they rarely engage in self-critical methodological examinations. As the work of Hayden White has demonstrated, even when we reassemble our stories as best we can from the always partial available evidence, the narrative structure imposes certain presuppositions, particularly about cause and effect. When we tell stories, we need to be more sensitive to how these embedded assumptions affect our work, and to the ways different readers receive them.

Finally, as scholars we must recognize that we are at the center of a highly politicized power/knowledge nexus with important contemporary implications for public policy. Whether we like it or not, our cultural and scholarly priorities are intimately involved in the validation of contemporary meanings that can have profound repercussions on other people. This fact is not lost on the putative "subjects" who can and do challenge the dominant hegemonic discourses they view as oppressive. Agency is not the privilege of the few—we are all constantly involved in creative reconstructions of knowledge/power relations with

real consequences. Thus the postmodern project in history should, if nothing else, alert us to the responsibility we all have to understand these dynamics within our societies and to constantly question them with new ideas.

Denis Diderot and the Postmodern Enlightenment

J.B. Shank

Postmodern thinkers are not fond of the eighteenth-century Enlightenment. Accused on the one hand of imposing "a totalizing universalism which effaces all difference"[1] and on the other of a rejection of universals in the name of an equally totalitarian "factual mentality,"[2] the Enlightenment has become the scapegoat for a whole range of contemporary writers with very different intellectual frustrations. For most contemporary cultural warriors, dualism is the enemy to be conquered, a dualism which is observed in the tendency to reduce the world into opposing categories such as subject and object, mind and body, man and nature (the gender bias here is crucial), human and animal, and fact and value—to name only a few of the most salient within contemporary intellectual discourse. Moreover, scanning this discourse, it would appear that these critics have succeeded in positioning the Enlightenment at the root of our current dualistic pathology. As the recent "Beyond Dualism" conference held at Stanford in 1995 affirmed, the call today is for a "post-enlightenment" thought capable of transcending the outmoded "absolutes" of Enlightenment rationality. Thus, the eighteenth-century Enlightenment stands accused today for the oppressive dualism that plagues us. As the great age when a supposedly "totalizing dualism" was established as the paradigm of modernity, this period in intellectual history, say most postmodern writers, must carry the blame for much that is wrong today.

For a student of the French Enlightenment, the irony of this contemporary struggle is that it appears largely misdirected. Devoid of nuance at best, and historically inaccurate at worst, the conception of "the Enlightenment" common in this contemporary critical discourse does not hold up well in the face of the writings themselves.[3] Rather than a bastion of absolutist and dogmatic think-

ing as postmodern critics would have it, the historical Enlightenment reflected in the European thought of the eighteenth century, by contrast, is characterized by a critical skepticism, an ironic detachment from dualistic rationalism, and a profound humility and "philosophical modesty" in the face of nature. This intellectual temperament, moreover, shares more similarities with the recent efforts to define "the postmodern mind" than it does with the totalizing dualism that is the enemy today.[4] Yet this more postmodern Enlightenment, the historical Enlightenment of France in the middle of the eighteenth century, for example, does not have a voice in contemporary intellectual discussion. As a result, I intend this essay as a critique of the "totalitarian" Enlightenment so in vogue today by considering the similarities between this other, historical Enlightenment and contemporary critiques of dualism. My focus will be on writings of one of the greatest thinkers of the period, Denis Diderot. As I will argue, far from a totalitarian universalist or a dogmatic instrumental empiricist, Diderot's sensibilities are strikingly postmodern, especially in his vigorous efforts to transcend the opposition of mind and body, nature and man, and subject and object characteristic of dualistic rationalism. Hence, in showing Diderot's efforts to move "beyond dualism," I want to make a claim for him, and the French Enlightenment more generally, as an ancestor of much postmodern discourse.[5]

To bring a convenient economy to this essay, I want to draw on a model of modernity found in Stephen Toulmin's recent book *Cosmopolis: The Hidden Agenda of Modernity*.[6] Toulmin is a representative postmodern critic of rationalism, and he is equally mainstream in his disparaging neglect of the complexities of Enlightenment thought. Thus while I find Toulmin's book to be tremendously insightful, it provides a perfect frame through which to rehabilitate a writer like Diderot.

Toulmin's thesis in *Cosmopolis* is both profound and elegantly simple. According to Toulmin, European thought underwent a profound "paradigmatic revolution" (to use Toulmin's own Kuhnian language) during the middle of the seventeenth century shaped by, among other things, the horrors of the religious wars and the rapid social and economic transformations precipitated by the emergence of the European nation-state system. During this revolution, Renaissance "modernity"—embodied most completely for Toulmin in figures like Erasmus, Shakespeare and Montaigne—was replaced by a rationalist "modernity" exemplified in the writings of Descartes. Stated with characteristic clarity and simplicity, the shift which Toulmin sees can be characterized by the follow-

ing transformations: a change from the supremacy of oral knowledge to written, a shift from particularism to universalism, a shift from the local to the general, and a shift from the timely to the timeless.

Explicitly drawing the connections between Renaissance "modernity" and contemporary "postmodernity," Toulmin suggests that the patterns of thought that we today dichotomize as "modern" and "postmodern" are in fact two sides of a single historical process constitutive of the modern world itself. In this conceptualization, the development of the philosophical foundations of what we today call "modern thought," embodied historically in the assertion of Cartesian rationalism in the seventeenth century as the dominant paradigm of thought, is explained in terms of an intellectual opposition between this new, emergent Cartesian philosophical outlook and an older, humanist notion of the modern with a very different philosophical character. Following this model into the present, Toulmin's main argument is that this earlier, Renaissance idea of the modern— the modern exemplified in the writings of Shakespeare and Montaigne, for example, and characterized for Toulmin by a bias toward orality, particularism, localism, and temporality as opposed to the Cartesian bias toward the written, universal, general, and timeless— has much in common with contemporary postmodern thought. Thus, as Toulmin argues, since this Cartesian conception of the modern was first constituted in opposition to the more "postmodern" thought of the Renaissance humanists, contemporary thought has much to learn by framing the current debates between postmodernism and modern Cartesian rationalism in historical terms. In fact, although Toulmin does not make this point explicitly, *Cosmopolis* even points to a more general dialectical understanding of the Modern (necessarily expressed here with a capital 'M') with important implications for contemporary intellectual history. In this dialectic suggested by Toulmin's work, the contemporary categories of "modern" and "postmodern" thought can be seen as the two aspects of a single dialectic of the "Modern", a dialectic that we continue to live within today. Within this frame, the Cartesian-Humanist contestation of the seventeenth century and the modern-postmodern disputes of the twentieth are but two manifestations of a single historical process, a process at least as old as the thirteenth century and one best understood as an integrated whole with dual faces in constant interaction with one another. At the very least, the modern dialectic described by Toulmin provides a useful heuristic for understanding the history of Western thought. Viewed in terms of current intellectual discussion, however, it is also powerful for another reason. By connecting contemporary discourses with the history of intellectual critique, this model supports the contention, which Toulmin argues for throughout *Cosmopolis,* that an absence of historical

perspective is hindering contemporary intellectual work.

I find Toulmin's general philosophical and critical outlook to be lucid and compelling. I also find his particular reading of the relationship between the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries to be both historically accurate and philosophically profound in light of contemporary intellectual concerns. Unfortunately, like so many other contemporary writers, Toulmin's reading of the eighteenth century is far less nuanced. Insistent on seeing a monolithic rationalism reigning triumphant from the seventeenth century into the twentieth, Toulmin effaces the equally crucial reaction against seventeenth-century rationalism which characterized the century of the Enlightenment. As he writes, referring with the phrase "framework of ideas" to the Cartesian paradigm of thought described above:

> After 1660, there developed an overall framework of ideas about humanity and nature, rational mind and causal matter, that gained the standing of "common sense": for the next 100, 150, or 200 years, the main timbers of this framework of beliefs were rarely called into question. They were spoken of as "allowed by all men" or "standing to reason," and they were seen as needing no further justification than that. Whatever shortcomings they may have today, from 1700 on they were taken to "go without saying": and in practice they often went unsaid. Between them they defined a system of ideas that we may refer to as the Modern world view, or the "framework of Modernity."[7]

This is not the place to indulge in an extended critique of Toulmin, but it is frustrating to see the author falling into the all-too-common trap of seeing a monolithic modern world view emerging with Cartesian rationalism only to come unglued in recent years. In this case, however, Toulmin's embrace of postmodern platitudes is especially maddening since his historical notion of a dialectic within modernity, illustrated in his analysis of the paradigm shift of the seventeenth century, is suggestive, in my opinion, of a possible broad rereading of the relationship between today's categories of modern and postmodern. But I will leave my thoughts on this until the end. First, I want to show the inadequacies of Toulmin's characterization of the "Modern world view," and by extension the weakness inherent in a broad range of postmodern discourse which his view represents. I will point to these failures by showing how "un-modern" a prototypical Enlightenment thinker like Diderot looks in light of Toulmin's unitary "framework of Modernity."

Toulmin makes a convenient target here since he provides us with a very concise checklist of propositions which he believes characterize the unquestioned presuppositions of the modern world view. As we will see, in almost

every case Diderot holds a different view. The keystone of Toulmin's model is the Cartesian dualism between man and nature which, the author contends, remained an unexamined assumption of all acceptable thought from the end of the seventeenth century onward. Thus, in listing his "twelve dichotomies of modernity," Toulmin divides them into two groups of six, one group under the heading of "Nature" and another group under the heading of "Humanity."[8] We will have occasion to consider many of the specific dichotomies in relation to Diderot's thought shortly, but since this strict division between "nature" and "humanity" is itself anathema to Diderot's philosophical outlook, it is perhaps best to begin here.

It is not an exaggeration to say that the relationship between humankind and nature, or phrased more precisely the relationship between biological necessity and human freedom, constitutes one of the major preoccupations of Diderot's writing. This preoccupation manifests itself in a variety of ways. As Jacques Roger notes in his monumental synthetic history of biological thought in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries: "Diderot is the eighteenth-century *philosophe* who attributed the greatest importance to biological problems."[9] Moreover, Diderot was something of a natural scientist himself, writing a number of theoretical treatises addressing problems in the life sciences. He was a particularly attentive student of biogenesis and reproduction, examining, along with his colleague Buffon, the characteristics of vital matter. His work as editor of the *Encyclopédie* also brought him into close contact with all the leading naturalists of the period, and he wrote a number of the salient articles in the life sciences himself. Yet Diderot's interest in humankind's relation to nature was not restricted to science. His erotic literature like *Les Bijoux Indiscrets* examines the importance of physical pleasure in human life, seeking always to show the "natural benevolence" of the passions and the tyranny that results from their repression. Similarly, in such political works as *Le Supplement au Voyage de Bougainville,* Diderot is at pains to show the socially beneficial results which follow from a freer definition of sexual propriety, results which derive from recognizing the biological character of human society.

In all of these writings, Diderot struggles to break down the division between humankind as biological creature and humankind as independent rational agent. In fact, Diderot's eagerness to efface the distinction between the natural and the human has lead many commentators to conclude that Diderot shared, along with such other notorious eighteenth-century materialists as Julien de la Mettrie and Baron D'Holbach, a full-blown materialist outlook by the end of his life.[10] I find Diderot's views in this regard more ambiguous, but even their ambiguity calls into question Toulmin's rigid dichotomization of the thought

from this period. Writing of the distinction between rational thought and matter, Toulmin states that: "After 1700, the idea that matter in a sufficiently complex organization, as in a computer, could perform intellectual procedures was unthinkable." He concedes that "a heretical minority (including John Locke) tried to keep the issue partly open," but concludes that "common sense" railed against rational matter.[11] Writing of de la Mettrie, for example, a thinker who espoused such heretical views, Toulmin calls him "a scandalous writer whose works were read at the time as deliberately outrageous paradoxes."[12] While Toulmin is right in seeing de la Mettrie as an extremist, he is wrong to conclude from this that "thinking matter" was inconceivable. As Diderot demonstrates, an entire generation of natural scientists not only took the problem very seriously, but developed a subtle philosophy attempting to connect humankind's biological character with its rational freedom.[13]

Diderot is most interesting and eloquent on this question in two short dialogues written in the 1770s, *Conversation Between D'Alembert and Diderot* and *D'Alembert's Dream.*[14] In *Conversation Between D'Alembert and Diderot,* D'Alembert opens the dialogue by pointing to the dilemmas inherent in atheistic materialism. As he states: "But other difficulties lie in wait for anyone who rejects (the Supreme Being), for after all, if this sensitivity that you substitute for him is a general and essential property of nature, then stone must feel." Diderot, undaunted, responds: "And why not?"[15] A philosophically nuanced argument for vital materialism ensues, developed in response to the counter-claims posed by D'Alembert. Summarizing his arguments throughout this exchange, Diderot concludes:

> By refusing to entertain a simple hypothesis that explains everything- sensitivity as a property common to all matter or as a result of the organization of matter- you are flying in the face of common sense and plunging into a chasm of mysteries, contradictions and absurdities.[16]

For Diderot, then, vital materialism was not "unthinkable" and "contrary to common sense" as Toulmin would have it; rather, common sense itself demands that this simple hypothesis—that matter might be capable of thought—be maintained. In *D'Alembert's Dream,* arguments in favor of vital materialism are developed even more extensively, drawing on metaphors of a beehive, a spider's web, and a vibrating string in order to help illustrate the possibility that thinking matter might only be a more complex form of ordinary matter. The result is a powerful philosophical argument for the essential interrelationship between human thought and physical nature, an argument, which flies in the face of the

unspoken assumptions that Toulmin attributes to eighteenth-century thinkers.

In these two dialogues, Diderot is at one with more radical writers like de la Mettrie and D'Holbach in his advocacy of a pure materialism. As Toulmin rightly notes, however, this extreme materialism was a highly controversial, even heterodox position in the French Enlightenment. Diderot's other scientific colleagues, notably Buffon, the Director of the Royal *Jardin des Plantes,* would not have accepted such radical positions. Yet it would not have been the idea that humans and nature were inseparable that would have disturbed them. What ran against the grain of Enlightenment thought in the works of materialists like de la Mettrie and D'Holbach was their dogmatic arrogance in the face of nature's complexities. Their materialism, the *Encyclopédists* argued, was no less dogmatic than Descartes' dualism. Both failed to adopt the appropriate "philosophical modesty" necessary for a responsible scientific position.[17] The fact that Diderot's extreme materialism was contained in a dialogue, in fact, excuses it to some degree. As a dialogue, it has the quality of a "thought experiment," an exercise in hypothesizing that suggests only possibilities without demonstrating certainties. Such tentative speculation tinctured with skepticism is characteristic of Diderot's philosophy, and we need to consider further his general views on science if we are to fully understand his opposition to the other "modern" dualisms which Toulmin asserts.

As a theorist of science, Diderot is best understood if placed at the forefront of the new interest in the empirical fact, experiment, and inductive methods characteristic of the eighteenth century and often emphasized in histories of the French Enlightenment.[18] Diderot was one of the great advocates of empirical methods in the period. As he states: "facts are the true riches of the *philosophe.*"[19] Yet to leave the story here would be to miss the higher stakes involved in Diderot's advocacy of empirical truth. Statements such as these also carried a potent polemical charge during the period in which they were written. Specifically, Diderot's scientific writings were engaged in an important scientific war being waged in the second third of the eighteenth century against the deductive Cartesian rationalism still dominant within the French scientific establishment (e.g. the academies and the universities). Diderot's call for a science rooted in empirical truth, therefore, was at the same time an attack on the prevailing scientific authorities of the time. On many occasions, the polemic inherent in Diderot's theory of science is made explicit. As he states:

> One of the truths which has been declared during our times with the greatest courage and force....is that the mathematical world is an intellectual world where rigorous truths

> lose their advantage when carried down to earth. One has concluded from this that experimental philosophy must rectify the calculations of geometry.[20]

Geometry here is a figure for the rationalism so despised by Diderot.[21] But read in light of its polemical intent, this statement also helps us to keep Diderot's appeal to empiricism in perspective. Diderot was far from a pure Baconian. Like Bacon, the great English critic of deductive philosophy, Diderot was emphatic in asserting the truth of the empirical fact over the falsity of abstract, deductive reasoning. Unlike Bacon, however, Diderot did not conceive of empiricism as the polar opposite of hypothetical or deductive thinking. Diderot's empiricism was far more reflective than Bacon's. In fact, Diderot's views on the relationship between experimental science and systematic reasoning are complicated and ambiguous. Diderot tries to position "true scientific method" somewhere between the pure induction of Bacon and the rational deduction of Descartes. As he writes:

> Men have difficulty appreciating how severe the laws are for investigating truth, and how limited are our means. Everything reduces itself to returning the senses to reflection and reflection to the senses: to returning into one's self and going out again without pause.[22]

At the heart of this conception are three postulates worth emphasizing. First, scientific theories are imaginative human constructions since human reason is essentially impotent in the face of nature's complexity. As Diderot states the point: "Since the mind cannot comprehend everything, the imagination anticipates, the senses observe, and the memory retains."[23] Scientific theories under such a view are human creations which bring human understanding to a natural world not fully comprehensible in human terms. Moreover, as human creations, no theory, no matter how complete in its empirical base, can ever account for the phenomena of the world in a complete way. Thus, Baconian induction is a myth. Only through an interpretive act of the imagination can an order be found within the chaos of facts which are presented to the empirical observer. As Diderot states:

> One of the principal differences between one who observes nature and one who interprets it is that the latter begins at the point where instruments and the senses have abandoned the former. He makes a conjecture from that which is about that which should be. He pulls abstract and general conclusions from the order of things, conclusions which carry all the evidence of empirical and particular truths.[24]

But since science is always an approximation and an interpretation of the natural order, science can never achieve Cartesian certainty. This is Diderot's second postulate, and the foundation of all of his hostility against the rationalist tradition then dominant in France. As he states:

> When one compares the infinite multitude of natural phenomena with the limits of our understanding and the weakness of our organs, can one ever expect anything more than the slowness of our work, the long and frequent interruptions and the rarity of creative geniuses?...Experimental philosophy works over centuries and centuries, and the materials which it accumulates, arriving at conclusions by their quantity, will still be very far from an exact enumeration.[25]

Diderot understands that nature always escapes any explanation, and that no theory, no matter how extensive, can ever bridge the gap between theoretical approximation and the actual order of the natural world. As a result, neither deductive logic on the one hand nor inductive fact on the other is a sufficient basis for valid scientific theory. True science for Diderot, rare as it is, results when the mind of a genius combines both. As Diderot sums it up:

> We have three principal methods: the observation of nature, reflection and experience. Observation collects facts, reflection combines them, experience verifies the result of the combination, and it is essential that observation be assiduous, that reflection be profound, and that experience be exact. One rarely sees these methods united, and as a result creative geniuses are rare.[26]

But there is still one further complication in Diderot's thought. This arises from Diderot's third and final postulate, his belief that nature is unstable and constantly changing. Contrary to Toulmin, who believes the proposition "Nature is governed by fixed laws set up at creation" to be an unquestioned presupposition of modern thought until the writings of Darwin, Diderot believes that nature is neither fixed nor stable. As he states: "It seems that nature is able to vary the same mechanism in infinitely different ways."[27] And as he adds elsewhere:

> What we take for the history of nature is only the very incomplete history of an instant. I ask, therefore, have the minerals always been and will they always be as they are? Have the plants always been and will they always be as they are? And have the animals always been and will they always be as they are? After mediating in a profound

> way on certain phenomena, a doubt arises which perhaps you will pardon: it is not that the world was created, but that world has been such and will be such.[28]

Statements such as these accord well with what Jacques Roger calls "Diderot's vision of an eternal matter in perpetual motion."[29] They also agree with Paul Vernière's conclusion that "Diderot exhausted his entire life trying to reconcile a mechanistic determinism, appropriate to the realm of matter, with a doctrine of evolution which seems, in the world of life, to include an obscure finality."[30] More importantly, however, they show the failure of Toulmin's analysis. Toulmin's assertion that "only in 1859 did Charles Darwin finally open a door out of natural history into the history of nature" simply does not stand up in the face of Diderot's natural philosophy.[31] Furthermore, Toulmin's claim that "within the Newtonian world view, the only 'historical' events affecting Nature comprised the initial creation, and a series of later cyclical processes" cannot be supported by Diderot's philosophical writings. In short, in light of Toulmin's "framework of Modernity," Diderot's natural philosophy is either an anachronism or a freak.

But how common were Diderot's evolutionist views? In this regard, Diderot had the full weight of the natural scientific community behind him. As Roger notes, much of Diderot's own thought derived from his reading of Buffon's *L'Histoire Naturelle*. In fact, Roger argues that Diderot's *transformisme* was more modest than Buffon's.[32] Other scientific thinkers like Maupertuis were equally comfortable with a notion of the mutability of the natural world. More importantly, however, all of these thinkers shared Diderot's profound respect for the complexity of nature and his humility in estimating the human capacity to uncover its mysteries. In this shared "philosophical modesty," these French thinkers also could include the likes of David Hume among their colleagues. For all these thinkers, human reason was not master over nature as Horkheimer and Adorno would have it; rather reason was a part of man's nature, susceptible to manipulation by physical necessity and of limited potency in unraveling the codes of the universe.

With this understanding of Diderot's philosophical and scientific views, views which we have seen were shared by more than a "heterodox minority," it is now possible to complete our discussion of the fallacies inherent in Toulmin's "twelve dichotomies of modernity" in relation the eighteenth-century Enlightenment. Several have been refuted already. On the side of "Nature," we have already seen that Diderot does not accept that "Nature is governed by fixed laws set up at creation." We have also seen that he does not accept that "the basic structure of Nature was set up only a few thousand years ago." As he explicitly

states: "millions of years have passed between each of these natural developments, and there are perhaps more changes to undergo and more developments to make of which we are unaware."[33] Similarly, we have seen that Diderot does not accept either the proposition that "objects of physical nature are composed of inert matter" or the proposition that "physical objects and processes do not think." In both cases, Diderot holds out the possibility that matter and thought, mind and body, may be the result of different organizations of the same vital substance.

On the side of "Humanity," we have also refuted other timbers of Toulmin's modern framework of ideas in the case of Diderot. First, while Diderot would agree that "the 'human' thing about humanity is its capacity for rational thought," he would not agree with Toulmin's second proposition that "rationality and causality follow different rules." Imbedded in this distinction is the very mind/body, nature/reason dualism which Diderot rejects. As we have seen, much of Diderot's philosophical work is concerned with exploring the causal mechanisms of thought. Similarly, while Diderot would certainly agree that "a causal science of psychology is impossible," it would not, as Toulmin claims, derive from Diderot's belief that "thought and action do not take place causally." Rather, Diderot's "philosophical modesty" in the face of a complex and changing human nature would cause him to doubt the idea that human thought or action could ever be reduced to predictive laws. Finally, we have also seen that Diderot does not accept the supremacy of reason over passion since both are equal manifestations in his mind of humankind's physical nature. Therefore, he would certainly disagree with the proposition that "reason is to be trusted while the emotions are to be distrusted and restrained." In fact a great deal of Diderot's writing argues against this very premise. As he writes:

> People constantly declaim against the passions. They impute to them all the miseries of man, and forget that they are also the source of all pleasures...It is only the passions, and the grand passions at that, which can raise the soul to great things. Without them, the sublime will disappear both in morals and in deeds. The fine arts will return to their infancy and virtue will become minuscule.[34]

And as he adds elsewhere: "It is the height of folly to attempt to destroy the passions. What a beautiful project for the devotee to torment himself like a madman trying to desire nothing, to love nothing, and to feel nothing, only to finish by becoming a true monster if he succeeds!"[35] For Diderot, the passions and reason are equally natural, and they therefore must be equally harmonized.

Toulmin's hierarchy of reason over passion, as a result, does not accurately characterize his thought.

One last aspect of Toulmin's framework of modernity remains to be considered- its political dimension. On the side of "Nature," Toulmin cites two propositions as characteristic of the modern view that contain clear political resonances. The first is that "God combined natural objects into stable and hierarchical systems" and the second is the proposition that "motion in nature flows downward from the higher to the lower (just like action in society)." Similarly, under the rubric of "Humanity," Toulmin claims that it goes unquestioned in modern thought that "human beings can establish stable systems of society, like the physical systems in nature." Diderot's thought calls all three of these propositions into question. First, there is no hierarchy implicit in Diderot's materialism. In fact, its very subversiveness is contained in its democratic tendencies. We have noted that materialism such as Diderot's was a radical stance in the eighteenth century, and the political and social implications of this philosophy go a long way toward explaining its dangerous charge. Yet materialism of this sort was never absent from modern intellectual discourse from the time of Diderot.[36] For example, much of the recent scholarship on Darwin has pointed to his own struggles, as a member of the Oxbridge establishment, against the leveling implications of this evolutionary materialism.[37] To call it "heterodox thought" is true in a sense, but it fails to do justice to the importance it played in shaping modernity. Diderot's materialism countered the prevailing "hierarchical modernity," and as a result his thought must be seen as part of the inherent democratic current imbedded in modern thought from its inception.

Similarly, Diderot's evolutionary ideas also contained potentially revolutionary connotations in their challenge to the idea of a stable nature. Belief in the stability and regularity of nature reinforced political ideologies defending the status quo. Diderot's *transformisme*, as a result, questioned political orthodoxy. Yet here the important role which such ideas played within the mainstream science of the period must be remembered. Buffon, an official of the French monarchy, held similar views. His evolutionary ideas did not worry royal officials sufficiently to put his job in jeopardy. Furthermore, the *transformisme* which was taught was often compatible with traditional institutions. Most often it amounted to nothing more than assertions that taxonomies are arbitrary and that nature is too complex to classify in a complete way. In the end, therefore, Diderot's evolutionary ideas could easily be reconciled with more traditional politics when the need arose.

More to the point of this essay, however, this political ambiguity only reinforces the conviction that Toulmin's assumptions here, as elsewhere, are overly

reductive. Toulmin's framework of modernity is a very poor map by which to chart Diderot's sophisticated Enlightenment philosophy. Generalizing from this particular case, it seems that the map fails largely because it assumes a rigid acceptance of Cartesian dualism throughout this period when the historical story is far more complicated. And this is not merely a problem with Toulmin and his book. The blind spots which lead to Toulmin's failures, unfortunately, are representative of a much broader problem, the overly narrow, ahistorical character of much contemporary discourse on these questions. Toulmin's monolithic understanding of the "Modern" is utterly typical, and while his schematic rendering makes for an easy target, it is a target that could also be found in any number of other recent works on the crisis of modern rationalism. But the point of this paper is not to accuse Toulmin of writing a simplistic book. In fact, as I have mentioned on several occasions already, I find Toulmin's general thesis and his specific analysis of other periods quite profound. Yet the very incisiveness of *Cosmopolis* makes the book's failures in regard to the eighteenth century all the more glaring. Toulmin should have known better. A book so suggestive of what could be done to re-write the intellectual history of the eighteenth century in light of postmodern concerns should not have collapsed into such hackneyed platitudes.

But if Toulmin's book is so suggestive, what is the better reading to which his work points? The answer derives from the similarities which exist between Diderot's Enlightenment philosophy and the parallel intellectual outlook of Renaissance "modernism" and contemporary "postmodernism" illuminated by Toulmin. In defining "Renaissance modernity," the precursor to seventeenth-century "rationalist modernity," Toulmin stressed the emphasis on rhetoric over dialectic,[38] particularity over universality, timeliness over timelessness, locality over generality, embodiment over abstraction, and subjectivity over objectivity as characteristic of this pre-Cartesian modernity. Noting that the rationalist modernity imposed itself in reaction to this earlier system of ideas, he suggests that postmodernity has much to learn from the historical changes which led to the birth of the rationalism it so despises. Yet looking at this list of "Renaissance humanist" attributes, I am struck by the degree to which they characterize Diderot's thought as well. More importantly, this similarity suggests that the dialectic which Toulmin sees in the move from the sixteenth to the seventeenth centuries may also play out in reverse in the change from the seventeenth to the eighteenth. Carrying this model further, it is not hard to see other strands of Enlightenment thought—namely those embodied in later figures like Laplace, Kant, and Bentham—as marking a reaction against the more rhetorical, ironic, anti-universalist and subjectivist Enlightenment which Diderot

represents. Moving still further, Romanticism, nineteenth-century positivism, fin-de-siècle subjectivism, and early twentieth century scientism could also be seen as later movements of this dialectic. Adding the fact that the various time schemes embodied in this dialectic can themselves be variable and particular, and that a "postmodern" swing in one time or place could coexist alongside a more "modern" swing in another, this model for understanding the problem of modernity becomes more interesting still.[39] Allowing for other complexities as well, like the possibility for certain non-dialectical, developmental processes (technology, economic change, historical understanding) to coexist and influence the dialectic itself, the model becomes even more convincing. The result, in my opinion, is a far more nuanced approach to the relationship between contemporary thought and its antecedents.

To sum up, what I am suggesting is that Toulmin points to a "dialectic of the Modern," born *in toto* with modernity itself and which continues today.[40] The advantage of such a dialectical view is that it allows us to see the similarities between Enlightenment critique and our own critical spirit. Rather than compelling us to move "beyond the Enlightenment" as so many are wont to do today, a dialectical view of modernity asks us to go back to the Enlightenment and other periods as well and to understand their problems as aspects of our own. Most important, it pushes us away from the abstract theorizing so criticized yet so indulged in by contemporary writers, and into reflection, dialogue, and integration; in other words, into humanistic inquiry in the best sense of the term. Not surprisingly, two works as different as Jean-François Lyotard's *The Postmodern Condition* and Horkheimer and Adorno's *Dialectic of the Enlightenment* each in their own way argue for a very similar view. For Lyotard, it is crucial that one see modernism and postmodernism as two sides of the same thing. For Horkheimer and Adorno, the totalitarian implications of the Enlightenment arise from a failure to balance reflective theory with the factual mentality. Taken together, both views suggest that we treat modern thought in dialectical terms. Following Toulmin, this essay has suggested that these dialectics have an historical dimension as well. Viewed in light of history, a study of Diderot's Enlightenment thought shows us that contemporary thought does not need to move beyond the Enlightenment. Instead, we need to return to the Enlightenment itself in order to understand the dialectic of thought that is embodied in this period as in our own.[41]

Notes

1. This quote is drawn from Erica Harth, *Cartesian Women: Versions and Subversions of*

Rational Discourse in the Old Regime (Ithaca, 1992). Harth draws on contemporary feminist theory and writings on the relationship between gender, science and rationality to construct her view of the Enlightenment. Her failures in this regard are exemplary of this literature as a whole.

2. Max Horkheimer and Theodor Adorno, "The Concept of the Enlightenment," Chap. 1 in *Dialectic of Enlightenment,* trans. John Cumming (New York, 1982). It is probably misleading, however, to call writers like Horkheimer and Adorno "postmodern" as I appear to do here. Writing in the late 1940s within a German intellectual culture still rooted in the traditional discourses of metaphysics, Adorno, Horkheimer and their Frankfurt School contemporaries are much better labeled as "the last Modernists," a characterization I borrow from my colleague Eric Oberle who is working on a dissertation on Adorno. Nevertheless, it is not inaccurate to see *Dialectic of Enlightenment* and other works by Frankfurt School writers, notably those by Walter Benjamin, as an inspiration for many of the contemporary postmodern critiques of Enlightenment. For example, the identification of Enlightenment modernity with a "factual mentality" hostile to abstraction is central to the neo-Marxist criticism of Terry Eagleton. Cf. *The Function of Criticism* (London, 1984) and *Ideology of the Aesthetic* (Cambridge, MA, 1990). On a very different front, "communitarian" philosophers such as Alasdair MacIntyre and Charles Taylor base much of their critique of modern moral philosophy on what they claim is this philosophy's excessive attachment to Enlightenment categories of reasoning. In defining the Enlightenment legacies in modern moral philosophy, for instance, they focus on the bias toward instrumental reason enshrined by eighteenth-century thinkers, offering in the process a conception of the Enlightenment very similar to that of Horkheimer and Adorno. Cf. Alasdair MacIntyre, *Whose Justice? Whose Rationality?* (Notre Dame, 1988) and *Three Rival Visions of Moral Enquiry: Encyclopedia, Geneaology, and Tradition* (Notre Dame, 1990), and Charles Taylor, *Sources of the Self: The Making of the Modern Identity* (Harvard, 1989). Of course, this is not to say that *Dialectic of Enlightenment* is the first postmodern critique of Enlightenment. Rather, it is merely to point out that the critique of Enlightenment put forward in this work remains a central strand in much postmodern critique. It is to the characterization of the Enlightenment found in their work rather than the work itself that I will be referring when I invoke the legacy of Horkheimer and Adorno.
3. I find the critique spawned by Horkheimer and Adorno's work to be characteristic of the former and the work exemplified by Harth to be characteristic of the latter.
4. David Harvey, *The Condition of Postmodernity* (Oxford, 1990); Jean-François Lyotard, *The Postmodern Condition: A Report on Knowledge,* trans. Geoff Bennington and Brian Massumi (Minneapolis, 1984).
5. At a session of the Stanford University Seminar on Enlightenment and Revolution in the winter of 1995, Peter Reill argued a very similar point with reference to Enlightenment thought in Germany. Diderot is perhaps the most glaring example in France of the intellectual tradition of interest to Reill (see n. 13 below), and I find my own views to be very close to his on these questions.
6. Stephen Toulmin, *Cosmopolis: The Hidden Agenda of Modernity* (Chicago, 1990).
7. Toulmin, *Cosmopolis,* pp. 107-8. His argument is that once established, the Carte-

sian paradigm replaced the older, Renaissance paradigm in a complete way and remained the unchallenged "paradigm of common sense and reason" until the twentieth century. It is this thesis that this essay seeks to refute. The more precise definition which Toulmin gives for his "framework of Modernity" will be discussed below. See p. 11.

8. The complete list of the twelve dichotomies of modernity is found in Toulmin, *Cosmopolis,* 109-10.
9. Jacques Roger, *Les sciences de la vie dans la pensée française du XVIIIe siècle* (Paris, 1964), 585. My discussion of Diderot's theories of natural science owes a great deal to this work, esp. Part III.
10. Roger, for example, sees a progression from deism to atheistic materialism in Diderot's thought.
11. Toulmin, *Cosmopolis,* 112.
12. Toulmin, *Cosmopolis,* 122.
13. Other figures that might be included in this tradition include the French scientist Maupertuis and the early chemists like Boerhaave (LaMettrie's teacher) and Stahl. Peter Reill is currently working on the history of this scientific culture in eighteenth-century Germany, labeling the discourse "enlightened vitalism." See Peter Hanns Reill, "Science and the Construction of the Cultural Sciences in Late Enlightenment Germany: The Case of Wilhelm von Humboldt," *History and Theory* 33:3 (1994). Margaret Jacob has also done a great deal of work on what she calls the "radical naturalists," focusing on individuals like John Toland and the connection between this intellectual tradition and radical politics in the period. See *The Radical Enlightenment: Pantheists, Freemasons and Republicans* (London, 1981). For France, however, the best work on the "vitalist" discourse remains Roger's history of the life sciences.
14. Denis Diderot, *Rameau's Nephew/D'Alembert's Dream,* trans. Leonard Tancock (London, 1988).
15. Diderot, *Rameau's Nephew/D'Alembert's Dream,* 149.
16. Diderot, *Rameau's Nephew/D'Alembert's Dream,* 159.
17. This phrase was first made famous by Ernst Cassirer in his famous work *The Philosophy of the Enlightenment,* trans. Fritz C.A. Koelln and James P. Pettegrove (Princeton, 1951).
18. As noted earlier, Horkheimer and Adorno make this "obsession with facts" the defining feature of the Enlightenment. For them, Francis Bacon, the great critic of deductive rationalism and champion of inductive reason, was the intellectual icon of the period. Other intellectual histories of the period which give primacy to the rise of the empirical sciences in their characterization of the thought of the period include Ernst Cassirer, *The Philosophy of the Enlightenment* and Peter Gay *The Enlightenment: An Interpretation,* 2 vols. (New York, 1966-1969). For an important analysis of the limits of this empirical strand even within Enlightenment scientific thought, see Thomas L. Hankins *Jean D'Alembert: Science and the Enlightenment* (Oxford, 1970). See esp. chapter 3, which analyzes the intellectual opposition between Diderot and D'Alembert and provides an especially interesting viewpoint on the analysis of Diderot's thought offered here.

19. Denis Diderot, *De L'Interpretation de la Nature,* in ed. Paul Vernière *Oeuvres Philosophiques de Diderot* (Paris, 1964), 191. All references are to this edition. Translations from the French are my own.
20. Diderot, *De L'Interpretation de la Nature,* 178.
21. Interestingly, in light of their collaboration on the *Encyclopédie,* geometric reasoning of this sort was championed by D'Alembert. For a compelling analysis of this tension see Hankins, chap. 3.
22. Diderot, *De L'Interpretation de la Nature,* 185.
23. Diderot, *De L'Interpretation de la Nature,* 232.
24. Diderot, *De L'Interpretation de la Nature,* 235
25. Diderot, *De L'Interpretation de la Nature,* 182.
26. Diderot, *De L'Interpretation de la Nature,* 189.
27. Diderot, *De L'Interpretation de la Nature,* 185.
28. Diderot, *De L'Interpretation de la Nature,* 241.
29. Roger, 611.
30. Diderot, *De L'Interpretation de la Nature,* 240, n. 1.
31. Toulmin, *Cosmopolis,* 110. The statement is also contradicted by the work other eighteenth-century thinkers like Maupertuis, Buffon and the other natural philosophers who argued for the thesis of *transformisme* in the eighteenth century. On the role of *transformisme* in the biological thought of the period, see Roger, passim.
32. Roger, *Les sciences de la vie,* 611.
33. Diderot, *De L'Interpretation de la Nature,* 241.
34. Denis Diderot, *Pensée Philosophiques,* in ed. Vernière, 9-10. All references are to this edition. Translations from the French are my own.
35. Diderot, *Pensée Philosophiques,* 11.
36. On the persistence of vital materialism throughout the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries, the period where Toulmin's "framework of Modernity" is alleged to become hegemonic, see J.S. Spink, *French Free-Thought from Gassendi to Voltaire* (London, 1960) and Jean Ehrard, *L'Idée de nature en France dans la première moitié du dix-huitième siècle,* 2 vols. (Paris, 1963), esp. vol. 1, chaps. 1-2.
37. Adrian Desmond and James Moore, *Darwin: Life of a Tormented Evolutionist* (New York, 1992).
38. Used here in the Greek sense of the quest for certain knowledge.
39. In his recent work, the noted German intellectual historian Reinhart Kosselleck has emphasized the importance of using multiple, simultaneous time-frames in the study of history. I am following him here.
40. Interestingly, Lyotard also speaks of the necessary simultaneity of "modern" and "postmodern" in *The Postmodern Condition.* I am grateful to Richard Schoch for this insight.
41. Other contemporary writers whose stress on historical modes thinking I admire in this regard include Michel Foucault, Jurgen Habermas, J.G.A. Pocock, and Charles Taylor.

A Critical Look at Foucault: The Problem of Modernization Theory

Michael E. Latham

Critics have again and again exposed the inadequacies of the modernization model, even for an understanding of the West. It still stands, however—a deserted mansion, its paint peeling, its windows broken, its chimneys falling down, its sills rotting; a house fit only for spectral habitation but also occupied, from time to time, by squatters, transients, and fugitives.

—Christopher Lasch[1]

The edifice Lasch describes is an intriguing one. In the 1950s and early 1960s, modernization theory dominated American scholarship on the problem of international social change. Over the next decade, however, the modernization model was largely discredited, rejected, and abandoned.

Today, when a historian stops by to survey the wreckage, questions come to mind. Why did modernization theory emerge in the United States in the years following the Second World War? How did it function in the Cold War context of the 1950s and 1960s? If the rotting "mansion" is still standing, what has enabled it to weather wholesale assault by a range of well-armed critics? Finally, and fundamentally, where might the historian turn for interpretive and methodological guidance in dealing with these complex issues?

Because the problem of modernization theory raises profound questions about the connection between ideas and their effects, between social science, culture, and institutions, it provides an excellent opportunity to explore the possibility of writing a history inspired by the work of Michel Foucault. Although his reception by historians has been "troubled and contentious," Foucault suggests interesting means for understanding the way systems of structured knowledge

produce powerful results.[2] Much of his work focuses on the links between the creation of knowledge and the exercise of a power that constructs, defines, and alters its objects. Foucault therefore raises issues that bear directly on the history of a social theory and its institutional practices. Through an application of some of Foucault's key concepts, it becomes clear that they can indeed prove valuable in understanding the development and application of a specific theoretical model. At the same time, however, appropriating Foucault for a historical study also reveals a number of problems. If Foucault's thought helps us understand why the "mansion" has endured, it gives us few clues about how to study the causes of its construction or the individuals that lived within it. For this part of the survey, the tools Foucault provides are somewhat less useful.

To be sure, the haunted house that Lasch describes was once an imposing, even majestic dwelling. Producing a massive literature stretching across the fields of economics, political science, and sociology, modernization theorists raised a structure that strongly influenced the practice of American social science. From their nation's position of post-war affluence, thinkers like Walt W. Rostow, Karl Deutsch, Daniel Lerner, and Talcott Parsons argued that "traditional" societies became "modern" through a process of rapid economic growth integrated with sweeping social and political changes. As Rostow explained, capital formation moved a society away from a state of "pre-Newtonian science" and "fatalism" towards new, rational production functions in industry and agriculture. Often resulting from contact with the West, these changes produced growth in compound investment, stimulated the expansion of the leading sectors in a national economy, and contributed to the formation of an entrepreneurial class, developments Rostow characterized as a "takeoff" in a country's "drive toward maturity." In tandem with this economic shift, the physical environment came to be seen as a natural resource, birth rates declined, social status became grounded in personal achievement, and more stable, democratic political institutions fell "naturally" into place.[3]

By the early 1960s, studies of the modernization process came to dominate scholarship on the problem of international "development." Early analyses had focused on the problem of how the gross national product of poorer nations might be increased, but a broad range of scholars working at a range of institutions soon proposed a more ambitious undertaking. Using a set of interlocking socioeconomic and political indices, they advocated a more holistic perspective, called for a comparative evaluation of the differences between "traditional" and "modern" societies, and turned their attention to defining the requirements for movement from one condition to another. In this emerging synthesis, "modernization" involved a series of closely related changes in economic organiza-

tion, political structures, and value systems. As C. E. Black explained it, "modernization" was the "process by which historically evolved institutions are adapted to the rapidly changing functions that reflect unprecedented increase in man's knowledge, permitting control over his environment."[4] The research problem at hand, it seemed, was nothing less than the creation of a set of universal, empirical benchmarks to categorize the overall process of global transformation.

As Lasch has illustrated, however, the stronghold of modernization theory soon became a ruin occupied by only marginal members of academic society. Less than a decade after its striking initial formulations, it came under heavy fire from scholars pointing out its fallacies. One group attacked the idea of an identifiable, sharp break between "tradition" and "modernity" by noting that older types of social organization were not always swept away by the modernization process. "New forms," a critic argued, "may only increase the range of alternatives. Both magic and medicine can exist side by side, used alternatively by the same people."[5] Others challenged the idea of an integrated process of change. Case studies demonstrated that social structures often remained unaffected by changes of national government and that rather than stable democracies, increases in political participation often produced volatile situations that could lead to autocratic military regimes, oligarchies, frequent coups, ethnic conflict, and civil war. When the Vietnam War brought a renewed focus to the problem of imperialism, critics questioned the idea that movement through the "transitional stages" could be accelerated by contact with Western economic institutions and culture. Rejecting the ethnocentric assumption that those living in "traditional" societies could only imitate and not create, many argued that far from producing a beneficial "demonstration effect," colonialism typically left a legacy of destruction and violence.[6]

Finally, systematic challenges emerged from both the Left and the Right. Drawing on a Marxist analysis of the development process, thinkers like André Gunder Frank attacked assumptions of universal, linear progress to argue that the pasts of today's developed countries did not resemble the "presents" of so-called undeveloped nations like those in Latin America. Distinguishing between "undeveloped" and "underdeveloped," these dependency theorists noted that economic relations between industrial metropoles and Southern Hemisphere satellites kept the latter locked in subservience to an exploitative, capitalist global economy. From the opposite side of the spectrum, thinkers like Peter Bauer mounted a "counter-revolution" in development theory by challenging evidence of a widening per capita income gap between poor and rich nations and insisting that foreign aid hindered local entrepreneurial incentive. Bauer also argued that if former British colonies like the United States, Canada,

and New Zealand could achieve unprecedented affluence, then theories blaming "Third World" poverty on the legacy of colonialism were not only wrong, but were also rooted in irresponsibility and resentment. For conservatives, policies based on modernization only led to financial transfers and centralized planning that hindered the functioning of an efficient free market which was the real engine for development. By 1978, the cumulative damage inflicted on the theory of modernization was so great that the editors of *Comparative Studies in Society and History* described its weaknesses as "blindingly apparent."[7]

But even this prolonged onslaught did not completely sweep away the central assumptions reflected in the modernization model. The concepts of "tradition" and "modernity" still fill frameworks of historical analysis and social scientists remain preoccupied with questions of how broad, economic-based theories can be related to the transformations of social systems and political forms. Even the dependency, world systems, and free-market analyses that did the most damage to the modernization model have remained deeply concerned with the problem of "development" and the forces that seem to have historically obstructed or promoted it. Although the prolonged critical attack has damaged its exterior, the solid walls of the old mansion are still intact.[8]

Foucault's concept of "archaeological" inquiry provides one means of explaining the surprising durability of the modernization model in the face of a determined intellectual opposition. Where older histories of science had catalogued "the progress of discovery" and the obstacles overcome on the way to intellectual achievement, Foucault proposed to dig deeper into the past and centered his analysis at "a level that eludes the consciousness of the scientist and yet is part of scientific discourse." As he put it in *The Order of Things,* he intended his work "to be read as an open site," as a study of knowledge revealing the widely shared yet unacknowledged rul·s that social scientists follow to "define the objects proper to their own study, to form their concepts, to build their theories."[9] Referring to these sets of unconscious yet essential discursive rules as the "epistemes" that make particular types of knowledge possible, Foucault went on to write a history in which separate periods are marked not by specific political or social events, but by rare and fundamental changes or "ruptures" in the means humans employ to interpret their world. Like the separate layers of artifacts uncovered through a painstaking excavation, Foucault's "epistemes" seem to mark lengthy historical epochs in which common intellectual standards and practices become evident, but most individuals and contextual occurrences remain invisible.

Because the base of modernization theory is so firmly set in the philosophical foundations of the Enlightenment, Foucault's "archaeological" method provides an understanding of why its central assumptions continue to endure. Ac-

cording to Foucault, the eighteenth century turned away from descriptive representation toward an increasing concern with the underlying "order of things," resulting in a different and still continuing system of abstractions in the human sciences, a "modernity that we have not yet left behind."[10] When considered in Foucault's terms, as part of a common discursive "episteme" governed by the same set of rules, modernization appears less as a particular theory that suddenly appeared in the decades following World War II, and more as the continuation of a long-standing, unbroken discursive pattern of social analysis based on the concept of progress.

As one historian has pointed out, "modernization theorists usually denied any connections with earlier philosophies of history." Instead, they presented their work as "modern and scientific, implicitly exemplifying the best of the modernization process."[11] With Foucault as a guide, however, the strong parallels between modernization theory and some of the most famous historical models of the Enlightenment and the nineteenth century become clear. Adam Smith's explanation in *The Wealth of Nations* of how it came to be that the English laborer was better off than the African king, as well as his belief that the division of labor might produce a similar advance for poorer regions and peoples, addresses the same issues treated by modernization theorists nearly two centuries later.[12] Condorcet's arguments in favor of Western tutelage for tribes requiring only enlightened assistance to become civilized also resonate with the hopes of twentieth-century modernizers to demonstrate "rational" values and "modern" social and political forms to populations emerging from older, superstitious and even "fatalistic" worldviews. Auguste Comte's "historical method" of comparing sequential, developing conditions of humanity, Ferdinand Tonnies's treatment of the transition from a "*gemeinschaft*" of close, communal relationships to the "*gessellschaft* " of atomized society, and Max Weber's attempt to explain the rise of uniquely Western "rational conduct" in *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism* also reflect integrated models of social growth strikingly similar to those of the modernization cohort.[13]

An "archaeological" study, therefore, reveals that modernization theory, its eighteenth and nineteenth-century predecessors, and even its later intellectual challengers all share a set of common assumptions about the nature of social change. Modernization theorists, along with their intellectual ancestors and later detractors, all worked within a common, unbroken discursive "episteme." Although they arrived at different conclusions, they asked a similar set of questions about the passage from "tradition" to "modernity," attempted to correlate theories of sweeping economic change with the transformation of social and political systems, and shared a common concern with the process of "develop-

ment." Encouraging us to read intellectual history in this long view, Foucault helps us understand just why it is that, although its surface has taken a beating, the deeply-set foundations of the old building remain strong and secure.

The institutional approach Foucault uses in his later works also provides the historian with valuable insights by demonstrating the way a common system of knowledge functions in diverse, practical settings. In *Discipline and Punish*, for example, Foucault identifies the modern discourse of corrective reform and traces its operation from the prison through the diverse realms of criminology, psychiatry, education, and medicine.[14] Running through distinct institutional sites, the social scientific language of reform was used to identify the deficiencies of individuals, categorize their failings, and authorize specific practices to discipline and correct them.

Conducting an inquiry along these lines, one finds the tenets of modernization theory embedded in practices and institutions ranging from U.S. foreign aid programs to the Peace Corps and even to the counterinsurgency efforts of the Vietnam War. Like the reformers Foucault describes, American modernizers also participated in the elaboration of a complex, "scientific" discipline which claimed to facilitate the unfolding of a progressive, "natural" process. Making use of their academic positions and government connections, American social scientists advocated policies to rectify the deficiencies they perceived and validated political strategies that produced powerful and far-ranging effects. Peace Corps "community action" programs sought to mobilize "passive" rural populations, established grassroots political organizations, and held popular village and town elections in the hope of transforming "traditional" societies and paving the way for "democratic development." Programs like the Alliance for Progress, the Latin American aid initiative of the Kennedy and Johnson Administrations, brought foreign leaders and educators to the United States not only to teach them specific technical skills, but also with the expectation that they would take "modern," rational, capitalist values home with them to replace those of their "feudal" or subsistence cultures. In the early 1960s, American counterinsurgency efforts in Vietnam, based on "strategic hamlets," were meant to do more than separate the rural farmers from the Viet Cong guerrillas. They were also intended to engineer a new, nationalistic loyalty on the part of an "apathetic" peasantry toward the South Vietnamese state. In each case, one finds the ideas of modernization and the attempt to accelerate that supposedly natural, universal process running through an institution charged with providing Western values as well as capital, correction as well as assistance.[15]

Although Foucault's ideas open up these interesting avenues for research, an attempt to apply his insights also leaves some of our initial questions without

entirely satisfying answers. In particular, both Foucault's "archaeology" and his concern with institutional practice give us little guidance in dealing with issues of cause and motivation. Even if one does acknowledge the discursive similarity found between modernization theory and its Enlightenment predecessors, how does one account for the reemergence or recycling of the modernization model in the late 1950s and early 1960s? Why did modernization theory become such a popular intellectual framework at that time? What did theorists believe they could achieve by articulating it? Why did a collection of social scientific ideas seem so appealing within specific cultural and historical conditions?

The problems of applying Foucault's methods to these questions become especially clear when considering the reasons behind the articulation and application of particular discourses. Foucault does propose a "historical ontology of ourselves," a project that might allow us to investigate the human sciences to ask why we are "constituted as subjects of our own knowledge."[16] At times, he takes very promising steps toward this goal. In his *History of Sexuality*, for example, Foucault describes the way in which the bourgeoisie employed the discourse of sexuality in order to affirm and defend their own values in opposition to the "dangerous" or "unhealthy" practices of the proletariat.[17] At other points, however, Foucault's account seems to avoid treating the reasons behind that type of discursive production and analysis. Although demonstrating the effects discourses can produce on the objects of investigation and discipline, Foucault's approach does not delve into the motivations for applying knowledge in specific historical moments. A materialist analysis, for example, might contextualize the relevant circumstances of labor needs and class conflict within an industrial capitalist system to explain their importance in motivating the creation of a discourse on sex. Foucault touches on the problem of causality only by citing a vague, Nietzschean "will to knowledge." Instead of identifying the interests and motivations behind the creation and application of systems of knowledge, Foucault only refers to the shadowy "spirals of power and pleasure" that, since the late eighteenth century, have come from exercising and evading "a power that questions, monitors, watches, spies, searches out."[18] For the historian attempting to provide what John Toews has called the "explanation of why certain meanings arise, persist, and collapse at particular times in specific socio-cultural situations," this treatment of causality provides precious little to hold on to.[19]

As recycling of older ideas, the foundations of modernization theory are hardly new. With modernization, however, American social scientists and politicians articulated an intellectual framework many of them believed would help clarify and serve America's national interests amid the challenges of the Cold War. Telling that story, moreover, demands an attention to the type of causal

factors and events that Foucault usually leaves unexamined.

As they gazed out at an increasingly postcolonial world, American social scientists took comfort in their own nation's postwar power, but remained concerned with the future of the "developing" societies of the world. Although the U.S. had emerged from World War II in a position of unprecedented geopolitical strength, the breakup of Western empires and the formation of "new states" presented a series of challenges. Over the next few decades, no less than twenty-three nations gained official independence from imperial control.[20] As these combined with the older countries of Latin America, Africa and Asia to call for international assistance in meeting their economic and social needs, the Cold War took an important turn. Competing with the Marxist ideologies of "development" presented by the Soviet Union and later the Peoples Republic of China, the United States gave global poverty and low living standards a new level of attention. For many American social scientists, evaluating the overall process of "Third World" change and finding ways to channel it became issues of heightened strategic importance and intense scholarly inquiry. To defend against revolution and Marxist-inspired "wars of national liberation," many theorists and policymakers argued that the U.S. would have to develop and present an ideology of its own. Modernization, it seemed, might help defeat the Communist threat that Rostow himself perceived as a "disease of the transitional process."[21]

Linking institutions and functions, attitudes and motivations, American social scientists attempted to provide a framework for stimulating the "progress" of "developing" countries by identifying a series of historical "stages" that their own society had passed through on the way to the apex of modernity. Defining the transitional path as essentially liberal, capitalist, and democratic, modernization theorists effectively legitimated their own nation's institutions and held them out as an essential model for others to emulate. As thinkers like Seymour Martin Lipset put it, new nations could learn a great deal if they sought to acquire the same "key values" of equality and achievement that "stem from our revolutionary origins." As the "first major colony successfully to revolt against colonial rule," the U.S. had also gone through the process of breaking with "the traditional sources of legitimacy" and exemplified the value of distinguishing between "the source of sovereignty and the agents of authority" through the formation of a democratic polity. The transformations were not easy ones, but, as Lipset optimistically concluded, "the entire Western world has been moving in the American direction . . . and . . . America, which was democratic and equalitarian before industrialization, has merely led the way in these patterns."[22]

As modernization theorists put it, the world of "developing" nations could find a blueprint for genuine progress in the forms of economic and political

organization that had allowed the U.S. to succeed. Less fortunate societies might have a harder time of it, but if they put the framework for a national state in place, built infrastructure, increased agricultural productivity, established banks and investment institutions, and protected the democratic process and the functioning of the market, they too might experience the rapid "take-off" that would carry them through the historic watershed of self-sustaining economic growth.[23] As sociologist Daniel Lerner argued in his work on the Middle East, "the model evolved in the West is an historical fact . . . the secular process of social change, which brought modernization to the Western world, has more than antiquarian relevance to today's problems of the Middle East transition. Indeed, the lesson is that Middle Eastern modernizers will do well to study the historical sequence of Western growth."[24]

In addition to writing accounts that resonated with official attempts to define a liberal, capitalist path toward progress, a number of modernization theorists actively sought to place their talents at the service of the state. As Rostow later recalled, "the Korean War convinced some of us that the struggle to deter and contain the thrust for expanded communist power would be long and that new concepts would be required to underpin U.S. foreign policy in the generation ahead."[25] The social scientists working at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology's Center for International Studies, a research unit that received support from the Central Intelligence Agency, provide an excellent example of a group working to serve that purpose. Walt Rostow and M.I.T. colleague Max Millikan argued that through modernization the U.S. could "promote the evolution of a world in which threats to our security and, more broadly, to our way of life are less likely to arise." Explaining that the "bulk of the world's population has been politically inert," the two theorists argued that the U.S. could "steer the world's newly aroused human energies in constructive rather than destructive directions." By providing investment capital through a long-term fund of ten to twelve billion dollars, assisting with the formation of integrated national development plans, and gearing aid to the "stage of development' of each recipient nation, they argued that the U.S. could accelerate the passage of transitional societies toward modern forms and fulfill what they defined as America's "mission to see the principles of national independence and liberty extended on the world scene."[26]

Convinced that promoting modernization would help speed developing nations through the dangerous transition in which poverty and instability made them vulnerable to insurgency and Marxist ideology, several members of M.I.T.'s group also took government positions. Rostow served in the Kennedy and Johnson Administrations as a White House national security advisor and as

chairman of the State Department's Policy Planning Council. Millikan worked as an advisor to the Agency for International Development (AID) and served on the Kennedy Administration's task force on foreign economic policy. M.I.T. political scientist Lucian Pye worked as an advisor to AID and the State Department, and economist Paul Rosenstein-Rodan served on a panel of experts reviewing Latin American development plans.[27]

These contextual factors are integral parts of a historical narrative that helps us understand why modernization theory emerged when it did and how it functioned. They are also difficult to explain employing only Foucault's methods. An archaeology of the discourse of modernization may allow us to link it with its intellectual, Enlightenment predecessors, but that approach does not help us understand why many American social scientists and policymakers found an integrated model of social change so useful and important in the late 1950s and early 1960s. If modernization theory exists only as part of an unbroken, largely static epistemic block, it cannot "emerge" in the context of Cold War concerns. Foucault's interest in institutions certainly invites a promising look at the different settings in which discourse operates. A larger sense of motivation and its context, however, is necessary if we are to appreciate the significance actors gave to the knowledge they created or the reasons they applied it as they did.

Foucault certainly raises interesting questions for the historian. His concern with the structures and rules of discourse, his analysis of the way ideas can function across different institutional settings, and his suggested study of how formal systems of knowledge allow us to define ourselves all open up broad avenues for research. Indeed, the greatest advantage that Foucault provides may be found in the way that his ideas allow us to see patterns and ask questions that we might not consider otherwise. As a source for methodological guidance, however, Foucault's work seems less useful for historians concerned with exploring the reasons actors may have produced the type of knowledge they did. In contemplating the now largely deserted and decaying mansion, I expect that I will complement some of Foucault's valuable insights with somewhat unFoucauldian methods. Appropriating his concerns and combining them with a causal and contextual emphasis will give me a better understanding of what lay at the building's foundations, why its ruins still stand, and what went on within its walls. Following nearly three decades of criticism of the modernization model, my goal is largely one of reconstruction: not to make the old building fit for future habitation, but to provide an understanding of just why it was that so many once found it such an appealing place to live.

Acknowledgments. This paper was originally written for a Mellon Foundation–spon-

sored seminar conducted at UCLA, summer 1994. The author would like to thank Joyce Appleby, Anthony Iaccarino, and Allison Sneider for careful readings of an earlier version of this work.

Notes

1. Christopher Lasch, *The True and Only Heaven: Progress and Its Critics* (New York: Norton, 1991), 162.
2. Patricia O'Brien, "Michel Foucault's History of Culture," in *The New Cultural History*, ed. Lynn Hunt (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1989), 27. Among historians, Foucault's most widely read books include: *Madness and Civilization: A History of Insanity in the Age of Reason* (New York: Pantheon, 1965); *The Order of Things: An Archaeology of the Human Sciences* (New York: Random House, 1970); *The Archaeology of Knowledge* (New York: Pantheon, 1972); *The Birth of the Clinic: An Archaeology of Medical Perception* (New York: Vintage, 1973); *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison* (New York: Vintage, 1977); *The History of Sexuality*, Vol. 1 (New York: Random House, 1978).
3. W. W. Rostow, *The Stages of Economic Growth: A Non-Communist Manifesto* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1960), 4-16. For an overview of modernization theory, see H.W. Arndt, *Economic Development: The History of an Idea* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1987). Landmark works in the field include Karl Deutsch, "Social Mobilization and Political Development," *American Political Science Review* 55(1961): 493-514; Daniel Lerner, *The Passing of Traditional Society* (New York: The Free Press, 1958); Talcott Parsons, *Societies: Evolutionary and Comparative Perspectives* (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice Hall, 1966).
4. C. E. Black, *The Dynamics of Modernization: A Study in Comparative History* (New York: Harper and Row, 1966), 7.
5. Joseph R. Gusfield, "Tradition and Modernity: Misplaced Polarities in the Study of Social Change," *American Journal of Sociology* 72 (1967): 354.
6. For key works in the critical historiography, see Dean C. Tipps, "Modernization Theory and the Comparative Study of Societies," *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 15 (1973): 199-226; Robert A. Nisbet, *Social Change and History: Aspects of the Western Theory of Development* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1969). Though still using a modernization model himself, Samuel P. Huntington also pointed out some of its flaws in his "Political Development and Political Decay," *World Politics* 17 (1965): 386-430.
7. James D. Cockcroft, Dale L. Johnson and André Gunder Frank, *Dependence and Underdevelopment: Latin America's Political Economy* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1972); P.T. Bauer, *Dissent on Development: Studies and Debates in Development Economics* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1972); "Editorial Foreword," *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 20 (1978): 175.
8. See, for example, sociologist Jeffrey Alexander's recent call for a "neo-modern" theory that will "incorporate some broad sense of the universal and shared elements of development into a critical, undogmatic and reflective theory of social change" in "Modern, Anti, Post and Neo: How Social Theories Have Tried to Understand the 'New Our Time,'" *Zeitschrift für Soziologie* 23 (1994): 167.

9. Foucault, *The Order of Things: An Archaeology of the Human Sciences* (New York: Random House, 1970), xi-xii, xxii.
10. Ibid., xxiv.
11. Kenneth Cmiel, "Destiny and Amnesia: The Vision of Modernity in Robert Wiebe's *The Search for Order*," *Reviews in American History* 21 (1993): 355.
12. Speaking at a Georgetown University conference on Middle Eastern studies, Rostow himself urged that Smith's work be "read afresh" and described *The Wealth of Nations* as "a relevant handbook for a developing nation." *Department of State Bulletin* 48 (1963): 827.
13. George W. Stocking Jr.'s *Victorian Anthropology* (New York: The Free Press, 1987) is especially useful as an overview of these themes.
14. Foucault, *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison*, trans. Alan Sheridan (New York: Vintage Books, 1977).
15. For a general overview of American "development" policies after World War Two, see Robert A. Packenham, *Liberal America and the Third World: Political Development Ideas in Foreign Aid and Social Science* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1973). For an analysis of the link between "development" and counterinsurgency efforts, see D. Michael Shafer, *Deadly Paradigms: The Failure of U.S. Counterinsurgency Policy* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1980). James Ferguson's *The anti-politics machine: 'Development,' depoliticization, and bureaucratic power in Lesotho* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990) provides an interesting Foucauldian case study of the institutional application of development theory.
16. Foucault, "What is Enlightenment?" in *The Foucault Reader* , ed. Paul Rabinow (New York: Pantheon Books, 1984), 49.
17. Foucault, *The History of Sexuality, Vol. 1* (New York: Random House, 1978), 122-127.
18. Ibid., 45.
19. John E. Toews, "Intellectual History After the Linguistic Turn: The Autonomy of Meaning and the Irreducibility of Experience," *American Historical Review* 92 (1987): 882, 885.
20. Within five years of the war's conclusion, India, Pakistan, Ceylon, Burma, the Philippines, Indonesia, Jordan, Syria, Lebanon, and Israel had all gained independence. Following the Geneva Accords of 1954, Cambodia, Laos, and a divided Vietnam came into legal existence. Within a few more years, Malaya, Libya, Sudan, Morocco, Tunisia, and Egypt also gained official freedom from imperial control and Ghana, Togoland, the Cameroons, and Guinea soon followed.
21. See, for example, the argument Rostow made as Chairman of the State Department Policy Planning Council. Rostow, *View From the Seventh Floor* (New York: Harper and Row, 1964), 85.
22. Lipset, *The First New Nation: The United States in Historical and Comparative Perspective* (New York: Basic Books, 1963), 2, 11, 130. See also William Nisbet Chambers, *Political Parties in a New Nation: The American Experience, 1776-1809* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1963).
23. See Rostow, *The Stages of Growth*, 4-7, 17-27.
24. Lerner, *The Passing of Traditional Society*, 46.

25. Rostow, "Development: The Political Economy of the Marshallian Long Period," in *Pioneers in Development*, eds. Gerald Meier and Dudley Seers (New York: Oxford University Press, 1984), 240-241.
26. W. W. Rostow and Max F. Millikan, *A Proposal: Key to an Effective Foreign Policy* (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1957), 3-4, 8, 70-71, 131. On the CIA and its connection with MIT's social research, see James R. Killian, Jr., *The Education of a College President* (Cambridge, MA: Massachusetts Institute of Technology Press, 1985), 65-67; Dorothy Nelkin, *The University and Military Research: Moral Politics at M.I.T.* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1972), 110-111.
27. For a collaborative work by these individuals and their colleagues, see Max F. Millikan and Donald L.M. Blackmer, eds., *The Emerging Nations: Their Growth and United States Foreign Policy,* (Boston: Little, Brown and Co., 1961).

Iranian Women Writers, Feminism, and Postmodernism: The Return of the Subject[1]

Jasamin Rostam-Kolayi

Feminism and postmodernism have emerged as two of the most important theoretical schools of the last few decades. The feminist critique now appears quite frequently in much of the work done on gender in the Middle East. Postmodernist trends, however, have yet to have a significant impact on the study of the Middle East, at least in relation to European and American works.[2] Just as rare are works that combine the two schools of feminism and postmodernism in writing about the Middle East.[3] Such an endeavor may not necessarily be worthwhile given several problematic issues surrounding postmodern thought such as the role of agency and subjectivity as conceived by Foucault. What is the relevance of Foucault's work to the Middle East? In another direction, are feminism and Foucault's thought necessarily at odds with one another? Is Foucault's failure to grapple with feminist concerns and women's movements in his analysis of power an obstacle for feminist scholars seeking to incorporate elements of postmodernism in their own work? How can scholars come to terms with the tension between these two forms of analysis? If the subject is dead, how is Iranian women's literature a form of political resistance and opposition, and how are women writers and poets political actors? How faithful can a feminist historian be to her/his subject if she/he wholeheartedly embraces a postmodernist ethos?

Postmodernism and feminism are not necessarily entirely at odds. Both provide models for nonhierarchical relations that challenge existing modes of Western society. As Irene Diamond and Lee Quinby have written,

> Both identify the body as a site of power. . . through which subjectivity is constituted. Both point to the local and intimate operations of power rather than focusing exclu-

> sively on the supreme power of the state. Both bring to the fore the crucial role of discourse in its capacity to produce and sustain hegemonic power and emphasize the challenges contained within marginalized and/or unrecognized discourses and criticized the way in which Western humanism has privileged the experience of the Western masculine elite.[4]

Furthermore, Foucault's theoretical explanation of knowledge and power, if extended to feminist issues, can be compelling. The two are inextricably intertwined because in each there is a "regime of truth." In *Power/Knowledge* he offers five traits of a "political economy of truth":

> "Truth" is centered on the form of scientific discourse and the institutions which produce it; it is subject to constant economic and political incitement (the demand for truth, as much for economic production and political power); it is the object, under diverse forms, of immense diffusion and consumption (circulating through apparatuses of education and information whose extent is relatively broad. . .); it is produced and transmitted under the control, dominant if not exclusive, of a few great political and economic apparatuses (university, army, writing, media); lastly, it is the issue of a whole political debate and social confrontation (ideological struggles).[5]

By insisting that truth is never "outside power, nor lacking in power," Foucault locates a complex network of disciplinary systems through which power operates in our modern era, particularly those of medicine, education, and psychology. The focus away from Western male elites and onto the workings of knowledge and power in a Third World context informs the relationship between women's writing and social reform in the Middle East.

The connection between women's literary culture and social transformation is significant in the history of early twentieth-century Iran, a turbulent period of constitutionalism, nationalism, and anti-colonialism. Iranian women's publications (newspapers, journals, and magazines, as well as published works of fiction and poetry) dealt with political, social, and economic issues conceptualized and addressed by women intellectuals and their elite reading audience. These thinkers established programs for reform and agendas for action. Following the popular pattern of forming associations, women formed their own political and social groups, held meetings, and raised funds for various educational projects for girls. Through patriotic and political activities women constructed a new social identity informed by literacy. In their publications, women writers demanded a socio-political space that they could occupy alongside their male compatriots as part of the nation. They were imagining another system,

creating public personas for women in business, publishing, public speaking and debate, and attempting to build a female reading audience. It is at this point where feminism and postmodernism, as theoretical constructs, inform the public actions of women.

The postmodern subversion of the subject as a focus of analysis has generated considerable debate in history and is pertinent to feminist concerns. Postmodern skeptics question the emphasis on a unified, coherent subject in the form of an individual. The postmodern death of the subject forms part of a larger critique of the Enlightenment, science, and liberating ideologies that uphold rationality, reason, and progress as ideals. Foucault suggests that the existence of a subject is present only in the archives of modernity as an illusion that is no longer possible in a postmodern context. With the focus on discourse, language, free-floating signs, symbols, readings, and interpretations, Foucault argues that the self and subject is only a creation of discourse.[6] Structures and discourses subsume subjects and individuals. In this analysis, individuals themselves are incapable of constructing and deconstructing social processes in order to determine the conditions around them and to effect a political outcome. If subjects are implicated in dominant discourses, then how do they begin to chip away at the power relations that dominate them? According to this dictum, if we can never constitute an oppositional discourse, marginalized groups in society should relinquish any hope for a movement of struggle because imagining another system is tantamount to participating in the existing system of oppression.

For feminists, the demise of the subject threatens to diminish the lived reality of women's experiences. In Foucault's writings there is no attempt to incorporate the specificity of women's lives or desires as discussed by women themselves. As Nancy Hartsock writes, Foucault's postmodernism abolishes the subject at the very time that women and other marginal groups for the first time in history are seeing themselves as agents of change.[7] If the subject is voiceless, there cannot be a history that grants special attention to women's experiences. Many postmodernists ignore questions of gender in their own supposedly "politicized" critiques of history, politics, and culture. Foucault mentions women as subjected or marginalized but as resistant to elements of dominant culture. While he orients us toward the minute, local, differentiated forms of events and power that constitute history and are well-suited for gender explorations, his narratives seem totally uninformed by feminist perspectives on sexuality and subjectivity, for example. This prohibition against subject-centered inquiry and theory depreciates the efforts of many women activists and intellectuals in Middle Eastern history who have written alternative narratives and undermines the

legitimacy of their broad-based, organized, or semi-organized movements.

If historical actors are not constituted as subjects who can resist without being part of the dominant discourse, then how can they effectively make change? How can historians conceive of people as constituting a different world rather than as just a disruptive discourse? Can those who live on the margins ever be able to escape from the margins? Inevitably this means that historians of Iran can only study the emergence of an Iranian feminist discourse in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries in the context of how it colluded with other networks of power. Not considering the ways that an Iranian feminist discourse directly challenged modern notions of progress and modernity and read against Western positivist discourses would be misguided. If Iranian women writers of the twentieth century were only participating in the existing hierarchies and categories of oppression, how could they be agents of change? Historians need not adopt a modernist approach to writing about subjectivity. They can instead conceive of the subject in new ways, as acting within and outside of the structure. In studying a community of women writing, historians of women must salvage agency and the idea of struggle through reform and resistance. However, elements of constraint and repression co-exist side by side with the possibilities of free will and change.

Historians need not reestablish the subject-object distinction or revitalize modernism in order to give attention to the marginal, excluded, and new social movements. The renewed subject will not be the same subject that modernists created, one of single form and identity with a purposeful march toward progress, but a postmodern subject with an identity focused away from the "Great Men" of history toward daily life on the margins. The subject is decentered rather than completely disappearing. Subjects, as agents, can effect the structure by forming their own discourse or resisting various discourses, but they cannot act without the structure. A subject cannot be understood outside of a discourse but can certainly engage in the process of constructing and deconstructing the discourse.

Saving the subject from oblivion does not mean reviving the subject-object distinction. A refusal to honor those boundaries separating the "objective" from the "subjective" is an important contribution of some postmodernist currents. Donna Haraway writes about a feminist objectivity comprised of limited location and situated knowledge rather than transcendence and the splitting of the subject and object.[8] Reciprocity between the subject and object, the informant and the historian, means that objects can affect subjects. The subject is represented in a space of time, making it acceptable in a familiar guise. Thus, the object, in the process of recreating and representing the subject from a previous

time and event, is participating in her/his own self-creation in time. The subject to be studied is in a position of equality with the historian and can overcome the subject-object power differentials that are inherent in the research process and the act of representing. Therefore, we can retain the subject in new forms while avoiding the pitfalls of the modernist approach to the subject-object issue.

The example of how two prominent contemporary Iranian women writers have conceived of themselves in relation to this issue of the destruction of the subject may offer a solution to this problem. Because women's writings in Iran emerged in the midst of a modernizing ethos in Iran and in the Middle East in general, much of their work reflects Western notions of progress and models of women's emancipation. Until the middle of the twentieth century, Western imperialism was a major vehicle for the project of modernism in the Middle East. After decolonization many Middle Eastern rulers became dedicated followers of the modernist ethos. Some saw the need for armed forces in order to protect their countries' independence. Recognition of the need for such military organization encouraged the early nineteenth-century modernization programs which established translation bureaus, Western education for select students, modern schools, and armament factories. Iran, however, had less commercial and colonial contact with the West than did Egypt and the Ottoman Empire, and it did not follow their lead until the late nineteenth century.[9]

The relationship between modernization and the emergence of women's published writings in Iran in the early and mid-twentieth century shows that women writers were addressing changing notions of the self, the other, gender, class, ethnicity, and nation brought about by contact with the West. Iranian women became increasingly self-conscious of their position in relation to Western women during this period. With references to Western women's rights movements, especially the British women's suffrage movement, some of these writers looked to the West for advice and counsel in their struggles at home. In Iran, as in other Asian and African countries, women's movements emerged during a period when precapitalist relations and feudal structures were being "modernized" and national liberation struggles were well underway. In modernist intellectual writings, women were touted as emblems of national identity, inverting hierarchical norms of gender, position, and rank. The veiled, secluded, and illiterate woman would no longer signal the backward past. The modern notion of *vatan* (homeland) was envisaged as female—as a beloved or as a mother.[10] That these concepts of nation were constructed in gendered terms is particularly significant in that women came to embody the dreams and nightmares of the nation, personifying its modernization.

Modernization and the accompanying secularization were, in fact, liberating

for some women of privileged class and ethnic backgrounds. Some of these women took up the banner of feminism as a way to become "modern" women, developing their feminism in response to colonial definitions of the "backwardness" of the East and with the supposed freedom of Western women in mind and the desire to catch up with the "advanced" world. Many early Iranian feminist activists fought for their own rights as upper-middle and upper-class women, but Iranian society and women generally remained firmly committed to their Islamic roots despite the outward trappings of secularism of the early Pahlavi reforms in the 1930s and 1940s.

Several women writers of the Pahlavi period critically compare the modernization efforts of the state and Western notions of progress with its program of emancipation for women. In her 150 or so lyrical poems, the poet Farough Farrokhzad (1935-1967) comments upon universal themes of love and death and other issues such as women's confinement and desires for emancipation that are inextricably tied to Iranian moments during the post-Mosaddeq, pre-Khomeini period from the fall of 1953 to the late 1960s. Her poetry evokes strong feelings of revulsion or attraction, seldom leaving its Iranian readers impartial. The novelist Simin Daneshvar (b. 1921) whose oeuvre is slim due to economic hardship, published her first novel, *Savushun*,[11] in 1969, when she was forty-eight years old. A best-seller for over two decades, by 1984 it had been republished fifteen times and had sold more copies than any other book in Iran.[12] In Daneshvar's writing we encounter a wide range of female characters—educated and illiterate, rich and poor, exploitative and exploited—that transcend the clichéd idealizations or demonizations of women. Her fiction is set in a woman's world, proving that the portrayal of women's experiences, as opposed to masculine fantasies of womanhood, can be the subject of novels and short stories.

Both Farrokhzad and Daneshvar have expressed an aversion to party politics and to totalizing ideologies. Living in a milieu where it was considered a necessity to belong to a political group or party, they never belonged to one by choice. As Daneshvar wrote in the preface to her short story, "Narges," "...desiring to be an artist, one has to be free—free from politics, free from the pressure of the politicians and the programs they arrange to produce artists according to their own models and then to seal their foreheads with the sign of their own fabric of idea."[13] Daneshvar's stories do not offer romantic revolutionary endings where victory prevails but rather explore and even celebrate undramatic sustained efforts for change. Zari, the main protagonist of *Savushun*, seems to weave in and out of freedom and independence, constrained by her family, husband, and beautiful house that imprison her. She learns that an ideal wife and mother cannot

speak her mind even in the confines of her own home and she questions the institution of marriage. "For a split second she even thought that marriage is basically wrong. It is not right . . . for a woman to be so attached to a man and a few kids that she cannot take a free and deep breath."[14] On the surface, she appears to be satisfied with her role as mother and wife, but she begins to resent the loss of control over her own life and self. Zari's personal transformation marks a gradual discovery of new dimensions of experience and autonomy, free from the submissiveness and acquiescence of women in marriage. Her transformation is not particularly glamorous, nor one heralded with great pomp, but runs in fits and starts toward a slow redefinition of her self.

Farrokhzad and Daneshvar's work, however, is still political. They critique modernist values such as industrialism, materialism, and secularism. They correctly identify the commonality between capitalism and socialism in terms of their commitment to economic growth and belief in the notions of progress. Stylistically, poet Farough Farrokhzad breaks completely with the conservative classical tradition that preceded her and even the more experimental modernist one contemporaneous with her. She engaged in blunt self-revelation, inserting herself and the men in her life directly into her poetry, writing boldly in the first person of failed love affairs and painful relationships. Farrokhzad defies feminine respectability by expressing female sexual desire. In the poem "I Sinned" she writes,

> Beside a body, tremulous and dazed
> I sinned, I voluptuously sinned.
> Oh God! How could I know what I did
> in that dark retreat of silence?. . .
>
> I whispered the tale of love in his ears:
> I want you, O sweetheart of mine
> I want you, O life-giving bosom
> I want you, O mad lover of mine.[15]

Farrokhzad did not subscribe to socialist ideas or to the political experimentation of the older generation of postwar Iranian intellectuals. In her poetry, she writes of the meaningless, empty world of homogeneity and rampant consumerism, of working-class Teheranis, and of women who are plagued by conflicts and contradictions as they attempt to become sexually liberated. She speaks directly to the failure of the promise of modernization to actually improve the lives of peasants, the urban poor, and women. Farrokhzad celebrates her sexual freedom and writes of women's sexual desires, but she hesitates to fully embrace

its implications. She vacillates between two sets of values, reminding us that a celebration of sexuality is not necessarily a liberating experience. She writes, "Bind my feet in chains again/ So that tricks and deceits won't make me fall/ So that colorful temptations/ Won't bind me with yet another chain."[16]

Both Daneshvar and Farrokhzad also address a deep sense of alienation, despair, and uncertainty in the collective plight of the majority of Iranians during the twentieth century. They both exemplify the fragmented postmodern subject who lacks a strong, singular identity. Where the modern subject is politically conscious, the postmodern subject is self-conscious. She emphasizes choice, free expression, personal liberation, and individual autonomy without any universalistic claims or totalizing ideology. Much like the postmodern individual, Farrokhzad and Daneshvar seek freedom from coercion by others and liberation from self-denial in their work. They have their own form of personalized politics, skeptical about the intentions and motivations of committed activists. They, however, affirm struggles against the state and its agencies, open to participation in various often contradictory causes and social movements. Consistent with postmodernism's anti-Enlightenment ethos, Farrokhzad and Daneshvar call for the end of certitude, modern rationality, and art subject to evaluation based on specified criteria.

Foucault would deny that "deep" subjectivity exists, since all experience is "put into" a person by the immediate practices and discourses of that person's culture, but Farrokhzad and Daneshvar, as women writing within a largely modernist tradition, assert language and authority which defy a singular, unified subjectivity. Many feminists are skeptical of the motives of those who deny the existence of subjectivity, or an outer reality constituted at least in part by nontextual relations of domination. The paradox stands, however, because as critics of the modernist tradition, the meaning of Farrokhzad and Daneshvar's work is dependent upon it. The social forces of their world are too powerful, too fragmented, too pervasive for their individual analyses to overcome. The existence of asymmetric gender relations enforces repression of aspects of desire, sexuality, and subjectivity. These forces cannot help but invade our conception of our selves. Just as Farrokhzad celebrates her sexuality, she halts to lament it. Just as Daneshvar upholds her right to an authorial voice that is unconnected to the grand narratives of male-dominated politics, she discusses personal, autobiographical issues under the protection of hidden, fictive identities.[17]

Women's studies and feminist scholars need not construct a positivist and inspirational history in order to counteract the implications of some of Foucault's thought. By discussing ways in which historical subjects act within and outside of dominant structures and by examining the complex relations between repression and change, feminist historians can salvage the subject, perhaps a bit

more constrained and decentered, but nevertheless an active participant in the construction of history.

Acknowledgments. I would like to thank Joyce Appleby for reading several drafts of this paper and the teaching assistants and participants in the Mellon Seminar for their suggestions and shared knowledge. The responsibility for the views and any errors is solely mine.

Notes

1. This paper was originally written for a Mellon Foundation sponsored seminar conducted at U.C.L.A., summer 1994.
2. The classic work in this area is Edward Said, *Orientalism* (New York: Vintage Books, 1978). More recent publications include Akbar Ahmed, *Postmodernism and Islam* (London and New York: Routledge, 1992); Ernest Gellner, *Islam and Postmodernism* (London and New York: Routledge, 1992); Timothy Mitchell, *Colonising Egypt* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1991); Michael Fischer and Mehdi Abedi, *Debating Muslims: Cultural Dialogues in Postmodernity and Tradition* (Madison, WI: University of Wisconsin Press, 1990).
3. Ella Shohat, *Israeli Cinema: East/West and the Politics of Representation* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1989); Afsaneh Najmabadi, "Veiled Discourse—Unveiled Bodies," *Feminist Studies* 19 (Fall 1993); and Mohamad Tavakoli Targhi, "Women of the West Imagined: The *Farangi* Other and the Emergence of the Woman Question in Iran," in Valentine Moghadam, ed. *Identity Politics and Women* (Boulder, CO.: Westview Press, 1994).
4. Irene Diamond and Lee Quinby, eds. *Feminism and Foucault* (Boston: Northeastern University Press, 1988), x.
5. Michel Foucault, *Power/Knowledge*, Colin Gordon, ed. (New York: Pantheon, 1980), 131-32.
6. Foucault, *The Use of Pleasure* (New York: Pantheon, 1985), 13.
7. Nancy Hartsock, "Foucault on Power: A Theory for Women?" in Linda J. Nicholson, ed. *Feminism/Postmodernism* (London and New York: Routledge, 1990), 163.
8. Donna Haraway, "Situated Knowledges: The Science Question in Feminism and the Privilege of Partial Perspective," *Feminist Studies*, 14 (Fall 1993), 583.
9. Nikki Keddie, *Roots of Revolution: An Interpretive History of Modern Iran* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1981), 29.
10. Afsaneh Najmabadi, "Veiled Discourse-Unveiled Bodies," 512.
11. Simin Daneshvar, *Savushun*, trans. M.R. Ghanoonparvar (Washington, D.C.: Mage Press, 1990).
12. Farzaneh Milani, *Veils and Words: The Emerging Voice of Iranian Women Writers* (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 1992), 183.
13. Milani, *Veils and Words*, 188-89.
14. Daneshvar, *Savushun*, 132.
15. Milani, *Veils and Words*, 143.
16. Milani, *Veils and Words*, 146.
17. See Daneshvar, "Mar-o Mard," [The Snake and Man], in *Whom Should I Salute?*, (Teheran: Kharazmi, 1980), 117-182.

Biography and Postmodernism: A Dialogue

Elizabeth Covington
Elizabeth Townsend

In the fall of 1994, Elizabeth Townsend (ET) and Elizabeth Covington (EC) had both advanced to candidacy in European History at the University of California, Los Angeles. Both had chosen biography as the form for their respective dissertation projects. The following dialogue is an edited transcription of weekly discussions which took place over period of three months. We hope this may offer suggestions to other historians struggling with similar questions concerning subject, form, and content.

Both Covington and Townsend were in search of answers to very different questions. ET was in the midst of writing a generational biography of World War One memoirist Vera Brittain (1893-1970). One of the structural goals of the project was to present Brittain within the context of other voices of her generation. Too often her memoir, *Testament of Youth* (1933), had stood as the representative voice for all women's experiences during the war. This work would place her writings and experiences within the context of others— other women, other war writers— and in so doing build a portrait of her generation. Perhaps certain structural techniques used in postmodernism might be useful for this multi-voiced project. She decided to speak with EC, a peer deeply immersed in postmodernism.

EC, recently returned from a research trip to France, found that her project on gender and the literary genre in fin-de-siècle Paris, which had been heavily influenced by broad readings in postmodernism, needed a more secure focal point. EC had chosen the career of the French woman novelist Rachilde (1860-1953) as her subject. Surprised that her work had suddenly become biographical in form, she turned to ET, who had specialized in biography as one of her fields of graduate study. They decided to meet weekly in order to discuss the

nature of historical biography and its possible relationship to postmodernism.

EC: Could you begin by giving a definition of biography?

ET: Biography is a form. The *Webster Ninth New College Dictionary* defines biography as "written history of a person's life, an account of the life of something (as in an animal, a coin, or a building)."[1] The biographer tells the stories of a life (or collective lives) within a narrative framework. The structure of biography, whether it is political, psychological, literary, or cultural, is dictated by its subject. The emphasis fits the life; the structure and scholarship are tools for understanding. Thus biographers debate the merits of different emplotments, structures, and sources for telling a life story. Some biographers believe they should proceed in a strictly chronological manner, that the biography should follow the path of the life. Other biographers find that the aspects of their subject's lives they wish to discuss do not conform to a linear or chronological structure. A more creative means of formulating life events may be necessary.

Biographers in general agree that the style, structure, and focus of the biography must be dictated by the subject, that the content should illuminate the life. The writing of biography, like history in general, is a creative act of choosing, organizing, describing, structuring, and narrating primary material. It is the art of storytelling, no matter how complex or analytical the author may become.

EC: Speaking of complex analysis, I remember that you first became interested in postmodernism by reading Giuliana Bruno's "postmodern" biography of the Italian silent film director Elvira Notari.[2] Bruno's "biography" (because I think the term can only be used loosely here) ties one forgotten founder of silent film to the greater history of an epoch, in this case Neapolitan regionalism at the turn of the century. What does Bruno's work suggest for your purposes?

ET: Well, first of all, I don't think Bruno intended her work to be a biography as such. The full title of Bruno's book is *Streetwalking on a Ruined Map: Cultural Theory and the City Films of Elvira Notari.* Her work was an attempt to use theory as a way of uncovering something nearly lost, namely the turn of the century films of Notari. Bruno, in having to reconstruct Notari's life from minimal archival sources, showed many interesting ways of approaching the material that is part of one life. Bruno's approach to the life of her subject suggested that an individual's life is more than just a biographical narrative, and has as much to do with the city that subject lived in, the cultural milieu, the others who worked in the subject's field, and the political climate in which the work was received.

EC: The postmodernist par excellence, Michel Foucault, would have been rather skeptical of the intentions of historians or literary critics who write biographies. Does the biographer often choose his or her subject because something very meaningful, be it a power system or a cultural system of ethics, can be found within that individual's life? Does the biographer somehow elevate the biographical subject beyond what their own personal agency was and what they did?

ET: That depends on the biographer, as it would be true of any scholar. But isn't it also true of anything that historians study and write about, whether peasant life, political movements, or gender? Isn't that part of the nature of writing? Here biography conforms to what Foucault wrote about truth as not being fixed knowns, but rather perceptions, choices, and goals that change in a society with its view of the present and past. This is a means of understanding the changing nature of biography, as a mechanism for understanding a culture and moment in time rather than offering absolute truths.

EC: Can you give some specific examples of the uses and viewpoints of historical biography throughout the ages?

ET: Plutarch sought to present the public lives of great Greek and Roman men as guides to moral and immoral behavior for politicians and leaders. This made biography a form of ethics. He had no interest in the "self" but instead sought to describe aspects of his culture, including politics, war, and government. Most classical biographies conform to this structure by focusing on the success of political figures.[3]

Biography in the Middle Ages consisted primarily of moral tales of the saints written by the clergy for the Church. Utilizing the Old and New Testaments as models, biography had a spiritual rather than an ethical or political focus. There was also a new Christian concentration on self, an idea beginning to flower in Western thought. These works were eventually deemed "impure" as reasoning, reporting, and scholarship became motives held in higher esteem than propaganda. For these hagiographers, truth did not reside in footnotes but in producing moral exemplars for spiritual life.

Working within a positivist world-view, Victorian biographers thought they were creating admirable memorials of respectable, heroic men. The Victorians found truth in exhaustive documentation. By compiling all evidence, the subject's life would be represented. Interpretation was suspect.

In 1918, with the publication of Lytton Strachey's *Eminent Victorians*, modern biography revolted against the heroic Victorian biography. Influenced by

Freud and the changing nature of the modern world, biographers sought to criticize and analyze the subject's life, exposing frailties rather than protecting an image. The biographer became an interpreter for the elite, not merely a disinterested compiler of life remnants. Twentieth-century biographers realized that to present their biographical subjects as "human" was a hard task indeed. One biographer, Arnold Rampersad, believed there is no way to get to the truth of a character because even the subject himself never knows the truth of his own person. There can be no flawless portrait. Modern truth is filled with fragilities and inconsistencies; the Victorian self-confidence about the world is gone. Modern biography focuses on more than the subject's life events. Some biographers attempt to illuminate a common humanity on a greater level, what Paul Nagel describes as "the universals implicit in every life."[4]

EC: Foucault deconstructed the notion of the universal. The search for universals is a very modern, as opposed to a postmodern, project. This modern approach can be seen in the work of the structuralist anthropologist Claude Lévi-Strauss, one theorist Foucault admired but eventually rejected.

Like the structural anthropologist in search of commonalities amongst the peoples of the world, the biographer you have just described believes that human experiences can be encapsulated within a notion like common humanity. The biographer wishes to capture the "essence" of the subject's life. A postmodernist would object to the use of the word "essence" for the most part. The postmodern skeptic would say that concepts like essence, truth, and reality are very illusory. They are constructions. One cannot truly recreate the essence of someone's life, nor do essential human universals exist.

ET: Contemporary biographers would agree with you. That what's makes the biographer's job so challenging. Leon Edel's writings are particularly helpful in struggling with these notions.[5]

EC: But more radical currents of postmodernist thought would deem biography a misguided form of historical inquiry. From an extreme postmodernist stance, biography is a suspect endeavor, the epitome of the creation of the "modern subject." Michel Foucault critiqued this process of individualization in modern notions of "authorship."[6]

ET: What exactly do you mean by the creation of the "modern subject"?

EC: Postmodernism suggests that a great deal of the actions attributed to one particular individual are not as important as the cultural legacy made of those actions. The implication is that one individual's actions and beliefs may be fig-

ments of a collective cultural imagination, a sort of broadscale myth-making.

ET: Again, most biographers would agree with this. The goal today of biography is the attempt to understand rather than finding absolute truth. Many biographers compare their work with that of a portrait painter. Paul Nagel wrote "I feel strong that in biography the author, like a painter, should lead the reader or viewer into a life, and at certain points leave the reader to reflect about what the story means."

EC: Interestingly enough, Nagel's opinion can be assimilated to one important postmodernist stance, that texts should be "writerly," that is, they should require the active participation of their reader. Modern historical documents are often "readerly," giving closure and a lesson of sorts to readers, purporting to have achieved a final rendition of reality.

Nagel's description conforms to a shift in interest experienced by both philosophers and social scientists in the last two decades. *Epistemology* (determining the foundations of knowledge, and thus truth), the longtime focus of historical writing, has declined in favor of *hermeneutics* (determining the criteria of understanding within specific contexts). The French philosopher Paul Ricoeur asserted that hermeneutics, interpretation in more simple terms, could be applied to the social sciences as well as the humanities. The inference here is that "Truth" with a capital "T," the counterpart of epistemology, is being replaced by interpretation. If Nagel argued for the latter, his description places biography on the edge of the postmodern brink.

ET: Isn't that true of all scholarship in the late twentieth century?

EC: This is part of the waning of a more positivist outlook toward objective reality and certainty. A linguist and philosopher like Ricoeur can suggest how exactly textual remnants are influenced by the compilers and thus can never be taken at face value. The compiler has already begun the act of interpretation by choosing to think about a particular topic or person.

ET: Of course. Our culture and sense of truth are always changing, which influences how history and biography are written. For example, in the late twentieth century, there seems to be an obsession with hero-killing. Exposure has been taken to a different level, seen in "kiss-and-tell" and journalistic exposé biographies. The media are more concerned with exposing small personal indiscretions—and thereby proving that the subject at hand is not the hero we thought that person to be—than in providing more substantial issues or information. This may be disconcerting to some, but it remains a reflection of the world in

which we live. Contemporary biography reflects this. That's what sells. These types of biographies exploit the very quality of being human that most modern biographers seek to understand.

EC: A postmodernist response to "hero-killing" as an activity would be that it follows the usual dualistic or dichotomous nature of modern reality—the perpetuation of simplistic binary oppositions such as good and evil.

ET: The world has become more complicated. Biographers understand this. Biography, like all scholarly fields, been influenced by Hayden White's (and others) notions of history and fiction over the past twenty years, bringing a new self-conscious awareness to the process of creation.[7]

EC: Now we've come to the pivotal difference between biography and postmodernism as approaches to the production of meaning. White noted that the correspondence of "real" persons to "accurate" stories written about them is illusory. White suggests that the historian's focus on making ironclad links between historical events and the persons who precipitated those events is a remnant of a high Modern approach to history. It is this "how it really was" approach that has come under intense scrutiny in postmodernist writings.

White contests the very form in which history is written, namely the putatively objective formula of historical storytelling called the "ironic" narrative. He calls for more flexibility in historical reporting. If the biographical genre is more flexible than history "proper," White might agree with many things you've said about biography.

ET: What do you mean by history "proper"? Didn't Foucault and other poststructuralists bring to the forefront the changing nature of structure as well as content? Any scholarship from the 1910s will look vastly different in the 1990s. Truth changes with time, and what we consider interesting changes with time. I think biography as a genre has achieved this flexibility. Another misconception about biography needs to be discussed. It's not a laundry list of the events of someone's life, but an illumination of something about the person or the condition of being human in that particular time, place, and culture. Biographers give meaning to the archival material left from a life. How does a postmodernist write history?

EC: The question itself lets me clarify one very prevalent misconception about the intellectual current known as postmodernism. Like biography, there is no coherent unified group which meets under the banner of postmodernism. Postmodernists do not write history. Historians write history utilizing some of

the ideas they have co-opted from the intellectual trend known as postmodernism.

This situation is problematic for the historian. As you just mentioned above, the biographer, and the historian, often see the search for meaning as their primary goal. The postmodernist JeanFrançois Lyotard has suggested that the search for meaning is the most pointless endeavor within society, a futile means of self-justification. Lyotard extends this criticism to technology, psychoanalysis, and virtually any variant of social theory. Having rejected the Christian god during the Enlightenment, Westerners seek out an alternative deity and have named it "Science." Activities are now merely undertaken in the name of "progress" or Western democracy.

This rather rash opinion can be applied to an individual's life as well. What is the point of the search for meaning in one individual life? What purpose does this activity serve? Do we need to emulate that person's activities or actions? Are we trying to valorize a particular time in our past? Is there a utility value for the present within one person's past life? Radical postmodernism, the type associated with the French philosopher Jacques Derrida, invalidates the search for meaning in one particular individual's life.

ET: So a postmodern approach precludes the search for any meaning whatsoever?

EC: No, postmodernist approaches suggest that numerous meanings can be extracted from any one document or text. The point is to demonstrate how the supposedly fixed realities of our world can be shown to be tautological, or circular, from a philosophical standpoint.

ET: Then why do you research or pursue the project that you choose to do?

EC: A good question, and one for which I have no answer. Personal predilection, I suppose. Critics of postmodernism claim that this absence of meaning betrays nihilism and relativism. If you follow some of the implications of their arguments to an extreme, then there can be a void where meaning once existed. There is no reason to search for "Reason."

I suppose it's time that I provide a name to go with the "epithet" postmodernist, as the term often seems to be one utilized by critics rather than espoused by those who are labelled. Lyotard enraged a generation of social scientists by claiming very succinctly that the secret of theory is that "Truth" does not exist. As a result, detractors claim his work is nihilistic, pointless, and even absurd.[8]

ET: What did Foucault see as the point or meaning of his work? Why did he write? Why did he choose the subjects that he did? And Lyotard? Derrida?

EC: As for Lyotard and Derrida, I couldn't begin to say. Foucault was a political activist, but he eventually broke away from established party politics and focused on those particular issues he considered of interest. In terms of his work, I think Foucault believed he was uncovering the subtle yet insidious social mechanisms which affect all of us in Western society. His three volumes on the history of sexuality deal with the subjection of the individual to control through labelling. He concluded that one of the primary facets of individuality in Western culture is sexuality. The term "sexuality" became more than a biological nomenclature. Foucault claimed sexuality was not natural, but constructed and made. The individual is defined by what, how, when, why, and where its body functions in that realm.

ET: In short, the individual is a product of the culture.

EC: Yes, but more pessimistically, there is no means of escaping this primary definition. Even in elucidating that process of being created by sexuality you cannot escape it. Foucault did not see understanding *how* sexuality constructs individuality as a means of achieving liberation or freedom. He felt "emancipation" from the labels of sexuality to be impossible. This opinion has troubled many a critic, leading them to accuse Foucault of nihilism.

ET: This type of perspective would be a perfect biographical topic, tracing these ideas through seventy years or so to see how one life is reflected by these ideas—biography as a form and not an ideology. In terms of being a product of culture, biography often gives one that sense. For example, Ronald Hayman's biography of Friedrich Nietzsche works with how philosophers are influenced by their eras.[9] Nietzsche was clearly a product of his teachers, the schooling of his day, of classicism, of Schopenhauer, Wagner, and his religious training. I got a sense of the cultural influences on his life and how they affected his development. Hayman contextualizes the philosophy of Nietzsche firmly within the era.

EC: It's funny you should mention Nietzsche, one of Foucault's most formative influences. But I think Foucault cared very little about the man and his life. Nietzsche's *ideas* were what influenced Foucault. Foucault obstinately claimed that philosophical innovations are entirely divorced from the individual, a sort of free-floating conceptual net. Interestingly enough, Foucault loved to baffle interviewers with the comment "I am not interesting." But what he meant to underline was that his personal life experience had very little to do with idea production.

ET: This seems in direct conflict with the notion of an individual being a part of a culture. How can we know those influences without exploring them? To understand that life, even for a postmodernist these issues need to be explored, even if they are not presented in terms of the individual. Details matter. Hayden White seemed to emphasize the importance of paying attention to the minute and small detail. Is a careful, close analysis an important aspect of postmodernism?

EC: Certainly, but with a different end in mind. While Marxist historians would attempt to study one particular group of individuals (laborers, let's say, who are on strike) and then draw large-scale conclusions about how the capitalist system functions within a given context, I don't think that a postmodernist perspective would search for such universal conclusions. A Marxist may focus on the small picture, in order to find how it blossoms out into the large picture. Maybe a postmodernists would focus on one small picture to demonstrate that the supposed big picture is a figment of our imagination. They would study something minute or detailed—with no pretensions of drawing larger, and perhaps even grandiose, conclusions about the essence of labor or the cosmos of a particular social group reflected within the testimony of one individual.

We have been discussing what the critics of postmodernism see as its most disturbing element. Discussions of the "Death of the Subject" began with Nietzsche and were further formulated by the structuralist Roland Barthes among others. Poststructuralists, such as Foucault, Derrida and Lyotard have also attacked the Western world's love affair with the notion of "Progress." Postmodernist thought has contested three major tenets of Western society: the subject, science, and the belief in progress. Since we're discussing biography, it might be wise to avoid all three of these targets of postmodernist criticism. Our tapes, and our lives, aren't long enough!

ET: All right, but an individual moves through life chronologically, so naturally there is progression in personal and intellectual development.

EC: No one can disagree that change takes place. Perhaps the postmodernist philosopher would agree that change occurs, but might add the coda (and excuse the slang here), "but they ain't necessarily getting better." Foucault emphasized this concept numerous times in some of his studies of discipline in western civilization, the medicalization of sexuality, criminal behavior, and mental "aberration." Our scientific framework and mindsets have created categories of abnormality. That is not progress, but a means of controlling humans down to the most minute details of their behavior on a daily basis. Foucault wondered if this process of control and individualization should be considered an ameliora-

tion of existence. Would the biographer search for the Nietzschean unfamiliar, and thus heroic, in his or her choice of a subject to investigate?

ET: Not necessarily. Biographers have just as many varied reasons for choosing their subject as historians do. You chose your subject [Rachilde] to gain access to constructions of masculinity and femininity at a specific time. Again, the biographer works within the framework of the life. I think my subject [Vera Brittain] actively strove to help make the world safer from war, but that does not mean she succeeded. My work will reflect these aspirations but my goal in writing the biography is to understand how the catastrophe of war transformed her life and made her view herself as part of a generation that would never be the same again.

Now, would a postmodernist deny the actions of a life, be they climbing a tree, signing a treaty, serving in war, writing a book, or giving birth to children?

EC: These questions lead to an example of treatment of an individual by a postmodernist. In this case, Jacques Derrida—who knows, of course, that individuals take physical actions such as the signing of a political treatise—has suggested that Thomas Jefferson signed his name to the Declaration of Independence as nothing more than a secretary. Rather than a "heroic" person who envisioned the political system of this country or its liberation by creating that document, Jefferson was merely the voice through whom ideas dominant in collective thought took textual form. Derrida's approach diminishes Jefferson's individual role and responsibility in the document's creation.[10]

ET: But doesn't that *deny* his role? How can a postmodernist diminish an important role? This statement seems arbitrary and contrary to history.

EC: Derrida suggests we choose specific individuals from our past, not necessarily because of their greatness during their era, but because of what they mean to us now in the present. The life activities of Thomas Jefferson have been invested with the freedom and liberty of our political system. Rather than the mere draughtsman of the "Declaration of Independence," his existence has been invested with meaning. Deconstruction minimizes the importance of these individuals.

ET: I think we have to be careful. The biographer John C. Miller sees Thomas Jefferson very differently. Miller's *Wolf By the Ears* looks at Jefferson's life in the context of his view on slavery.[11] He does not elevate the man, but shows his strengths and weaknesses. In fact, his thesis is that Jefferson, despite his ideals, could never escape being a product of the South.

But a biographer would not necessarily discount Jefferson's intentions about the future merely because he was a product of his culture. Rather, the biographer would look to see what his intentions were, how he reflected his culture, how in the case of a political or intellectual biography his ideas differed, and what his contribution actually was. The biographer is not denying that the subject lived within and was a product of a particular culture. This is what makes a biography rich.

So a postmodernist would say that biography elevates a person more than they should be elevated? That even an extraordinary person, such as Thomas Jefferson, is really average? But aren't some people in our society elevated above the others?

EC: Yes, but "average" is perhaps not the best word. The implication may be that Jefferson is no better than the common individual.

ET: But he *was* more than a common man. He accomplished extraordinary things that still shape our lives today. Biography, in fact, takes a look at the average and extraordinary and gives a behind-the-scenes look at a life, showing the average, the human side of success and failure.

If the postmodern project seeks to deconstruct preconceived notions, has it just replaced one set of notions with another? For example, the theoretical attitude of deconstruction? Postmodernism often intimidates people. And there seems to be no neutral stance when it comes to whether you like it or not. How do "postmodernism" and "theory" go together? Explain the relationship of the two ideas. Are they one and the same?

EC: I've already mentioned that Jean-François Lyotard believes that theory can only reveal that the search for "Truth" is a fiction. Theory, from this viewpoint, is a continuous process of selfjustification. So, one radical variant of postmodernism claims that theory should not exist.

Is deconstruction, of the Derridean variant, a form of theory? Derrida believes that the search for epistemology, for the foundations of knowledge, is a pointless endeavor. He espouses a radical hermeneutic approach. And a radical hermeneutic, rather than a theory, is a very personal interpretation of anything you choose to study.

ET: So how does that get translated into his work?

EC: For example, in the fascinating article "Declarations of Independence," he "deconstructs" the signing of the most hallowed political document in American history. He talks about how Jefferson wrote in the name of a people that did

not exist until Jefferson conjured them up. This fictitious body of nationals came into existence as Jefferson signed in their name. He also pulls apart the circular logic of the document's wording "We hold these truths to be self-evident. . ." By infamously deconstructing those famous words, Derrida contests their logic. But Derrida does not project what he does in the article as a form of theory. I think he considers deconstruction to be the method which enables him to achieve radical interpretations.

ET: So the postmodernist Derrida is not a theoretician? Are Derrida's disciples claiming to be theorists? What about their language? There is an elitist sense to their work.

EC: I agree that a great deal of the language utilized by Derrida and Foucault, among others, is pithy and difficult, an incomprehensible jargon to some. But access to the production of philosophers has always been a problem. The works of Hegel and Marx were probably no easier for the first generation of their readers. And I think that is part and parcel of their entire— I can't use the words "project" or "endeavor," because they don't believe in those kinds of words. They don't want anything to be simple and comprehensible instantaneously. A simple theorem such as "X + Y =fill-in-the-blank" is not their strategy.

ET: It seems like they've made their ideas inaccessible, too. Their choice in writing style is very unfriendly, very closed.

EC: Very anti-democratic. I agree with you wholeheartedly when it comes to Jacques Derrida. But not with Foucault. I think he did try to make his thought accessible to a large number of people.

ET: That's why he has become so popular. Even the topics he chose were very interesting, popular things that many people can access such as prisons and sexuality. Now what about the people who use these materials as part of their work? That was one of the things you were critical of with Giuliana Bruno. She uses the ideas developed by the postmodernists without explaining the concepts as part of a language, a dialogue. Isn't that making their ideas into theory?

EC: What I objected to in Bruno's work was the haziness with which she presented the explicit details of her subject's life. I wasn't sure I had learned much about the woman named Elvira Notari after I'd read the book. I think people use postmodernist thought as a suggestive means by which to formulate questions rather than as a model for the study of a particular issue.

ET: But that's the brilliance of her work. She took someone who had little

surviving archival material, and who would not normally have been a biographical subject, and through techniques such as mapping the city, giving a history of early cinema, and comparing her achievements with other women in cinema at her time, she was able— even though hazy as you say— to give us a picture of this film creator. That is what I admire in her work, and what inspired me to find other ways of pursuing, trying to get at my subject. Unlike Bruno, I don't have the problem of a shortage of archival material— quite the contrary. But by following her lead, I have expanded my project to include a number of innovative techniques to get at different aspects of Vera Brittain and her generation that I might not have thought of before reading Bruno's work. It opened new doors of creativity for me.

EC: Primarily, postmodernist approaches suggest the formulation of entirely different questions, and this is a form of creativity.

ET: How does the postmodernist, say Foucault or Derrida, ask a question?

EC: Here we can return to Derrida's article on Jefferson and the signing of the Declaration of Independence. Derrida queried, "Why do we need to ascribe the creation of a political system to a particular person?" Foucault also asked "What does it matter who is speaking?"

ET: The "why" of the world. Robert Dallek, biographer of Franklin Roosevelt and Lyndon Johnson, stresses the importance of analysis in biography.[12] Biographies must ask the "why" about their material. And that's what makes the difference in biography. Did the biographer, after gathering the information, go one step further and ask "why did the subject do that and what does that tell us? What does that mean?"

EC: That sounds religious or mystical or soulful in terms of the question that a typical modern historian reject.

ET: Not at all. Scholars analyze as well as compile in a postmodern age. Working with the remnants of life, biographers are that much more aware of the constraints of the documents they use. And yet, biographers realize that they are working towards an impossible goal. In 1929 André Maurois questioned how much the documents and materials available really tell about the man, and worried about how they distorted moments of life. He saw all of the moments lost to a biographer that were so important to understanding that life. Is that similar with the postmodernists? Do they think they can really find the answers to the questions they pose?

EC: Postmodernists believe that there are no definitive answers. As for soul, the postmodernist might say that only infinite and multiplicitous versions of meaning and soul can be delineated, even in one individual's life experience. Thus we shouldn't meander off in search of Vera Brittain or Rachilde and expect to find, respectively, the soul of a First World War writer or a decadent novelist.

ET: What *do* we find?

EC: The contradictory and disparate voices contained within these individuals, often at odds with themselves, or their society at large, or their backgrounds, or their peers, or their own sexuality. . .The list is endless.

ET: Again, biographers would agree. This may be of comfort to the biographer trying to deal with the contradictions of life. Here perhaps postmodernism can give models to the biographer on how to incorporate the many voices of life into a narrative. How can postmodernism help a biographer who does not necessarily subscribe to the entire postmodernist agenda?

EC: Once again, political parties have agendas, but postmodernism, as a vaguely defined intellectual current, has none. The current deconstructs anything that is hegemonic or overtly unifying. It's against making things look terribly consistent. The literary biographer of Mary Shelley, Anne Mellor, utilized the dialogic, a literary concept she took from the Russian formalist literary critic Mikhail Bakhtin to achieve this end.[13] Within any individual's life you're going to have many conflictual tendencies and trends that the Victorian biography would have eliminated. Postmodernists revel in the inconsistencies. Conflicts exist within any one individual's attitude towards any given topic.

ET: So how do you include that? Structurally, how does a postmodernist deal with all these many faces? How do they deal with the messiness?

EC: A concrete example? Foucault chose to eliminate any form of editorial in his studies of a parricide and a "hermaphrodite." He collected and published the documents concerning these two individuals, which is in and of itself a way of influencing and interpreting the material. The historian there is not a mediator, with the exception of placing the documents together as an act of intervention from the start.

ET: That sounds Victorian, almost, or at least a reaction against asking, analyzing, and criticizing. Do you think this could have been a reaction to the modernists' reaction to the Victorians? Funny, it really does sound like what Victorian biography did. They gathered all of the materials they could and presented immense two-volume biographies. Suspicious of interpretation, they presented

the "life as it was," although they edited out anything that would prevent the portrait from being heroic.

EC: I sincerely doubt Foucault had heroism in mind when he chose to tell the story of a man who murdered his entire family. My sarcasm aside, I think Foucault presented two exceedingly important topics in having this story published and showing that the historian *always* intercedes by compiling information. First, Foucault questioned the notion of objectivity. Second, he elaborated upon the topic which concerned him, namely that "deviance" is a cultural construct.

ET: So does Foucault's biography deal with multiple voices by having multiple accounts side by side?

EC: Yes, but in a contorted and curious manner. His objective in presenting the mass murderer's story was to highlight the criminal and medical disciplinary techniques of late nineteenth-century France. But in a more general way, I think Foucault would have preferred an endless succession of conflictual voices to any supposedly hegemonic interpretation.

ET: So are you saying that the interpretations of an action stand side by side, that the historian gives the many possibilities of meaning? Is it structurally possible to put voices together which are at odds with one another? Stylistically how do you include all of those voices?

EC: I don't know. We can let each other know when our dissertations are completed.

ET: After our discussion, it seems odd for you to choose biography as the form of your dissertation. Do you consider your work a postmodernist project?

EC: Yes, if I can divide postmodernism into a radical variant and a more moderate variant, and adopt the latter. Radical postmodernism doesn't allow for the notion of the subject. How can you be a biographer if you don't believe in the subject? The more moderate variants leave room for individuals and their actions. I've found a great deal of aid with these issues in Seyla Benhabib's discussion of the problem with postmodernism and feminism.[14]

ET: And that's the focus of your study of Rachilde, to see her as a product of her environment, how she reflects her times?

EC: Right, but with a huge exception. If Rachilde had been a mere object, that is an obedient, domestic bourgeois woman, she never would have thrown herself into a pond to avert a prearranged marriage. Nor would she have written

letters to Victor Hugo on the sly. Nor would she have escaped to Paris to be a novelist at the age of twenty. A more moderate variant of postmodernism allows me to incorporate broader questions about gender and the literary genre with some of Rachilde's truly interesting life activities, as well as some very curious and inconsistent personal beliefs on her part, feminist or not. Because right there we can take a particular theory, a particular perspective in history (gender studies and history of women), and talk about what postmodernism can do to it.

ET: You see your subject as a feminist?

EC: No, but I find it interesting that her stance against formal feminism became part and parcel of her identity. The word "feminism" was not current in the French language until my subject was thirty-five.

ET: Do you want to prove that she is a feminist? Is that important to you?

EC: No, absolutely not. Postmodernist reformulation of questions allows me to query how and why did the growth of the feminist movement proper affected her sense of identity and literary individuality. What Rachilde did with her novels was very suggestive for liberation for women in the end. She was not a feminist. But she only overtly disassociated herself from feminism at fifty-eight years of age. My subject is marginal or peripheral in the way she approaches women and their actions in the world.

ET: Why did you choose biography as a form for your project?

EC: Because the thematic perspective from which I was approaching artistic individuality and constructions of gender had neither shape nor form without a focus on one particular writer. I looked at the shift from the naturalist to the Symbolist literary aesthetic, and amidst a discursive paranoia about femininity and masculinity I lost sight of people, men and women. Rachilde allowed me to focus on all the broader issues and how they affected specific lives and written forms. I found the reassertion of the individual into my project very insidious, but telling.

ET: That comes back to my point: that history is always about people, that biography is the basic form we use.

EC: Yes. I set out to find a somewhat illusory "discourse" and what I found is a person through whom it spoke, but in the most fascinating ways which I can only attribute to her personality and sense of identity.

ET: Yet you still see a lot of value in postmodernist ideas and approaches to writing and the world?

EC: I find a great deal of suggestive ideas which can only be useful and meaningful to us without being destructive of our endeavor. We don't have to subscribe to nihilistic, pessimistic perspectives. The vast majority of deconstructivist techniques can only help us in the long run.

ET: You can't live in this world without feeling the influence of Freudian psychoanalysis. It's just part of who we are now. Perhaps that will be true of postmodernism.

EC: And perhaps it will be subsumed in the next twenty years by a new wave of historical and philophical thought. When taken to its extreme, postmodernism denies meaning to what we do by denying that meaning exists. Perhaps one hundred years from now some young historian will explain how the waning twentieth century produced a generation of skeptical, nihilistic philosophers. And soon some young historian will begin to contextualize the intellectual current known as postmodernism. Perhaps this can be described as a more conservative stance. We cannot let go of certain elements of cause and effect in our biographical studies of these women. This focus on contextualizing and understanding our respective biographical subjects makes us "Modern" rather than postmodern. I think that postmodernism can only suggest interesting ways of exploring, and eventually contextualizing, our subjects.

ET: Absolutely. Bruno's work is but one example. It is the practical structural examples of multiple voices that most interest me. Scholars working within a postmodern theoretical framework have devised interesting possibilities. It will be interesting to further explore these in the future. It's always fun to find new ways towards insight into one's subject. Our dialogue on biography and postmodernism has been very helpful.

EC: I agree. It has brought up interesting questions. We have to construct our own answers.

EC and ET: For both of us, these last months have been a process of discovery, frustration, enlightenment (without the capital "E") of a very personal kind, which has given us both a better sense of where our projects and thoughts are headed. But we have taken away very different things from our discussion. We came to this paper from two paths that met on a road that will now again branch off into two different directions.

Notes

1. *Webster's Ninth New Collegiate Dictionary* (Springfield, Massachusetts: Merriam-Webster, Inc., 1988), 152.
2. Giuliana Bruno, *Streetwalking on a Ruined Map: Cultural Theory and the City Films of Elvira Notari* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1993).
3. For more on this see Reed Whittemore, *Pure Lives* (Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 1988), Reed Whittemore, *Whole Lives: Shapers of Modern Biography* (Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 1989); A.O.S. Cockshut, *Truth to Life: The Art of Biography in the Nineteenth Century* (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovick, 1976); Waldo Dunn, *English Biography*, (London: J.M. Dent and Sons, 1916); Harold Nicholson, *The Development of English Biography* (London: Hogarth Press, 1959); and Ruth Hoberman, *Modernizing Lives* (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 1987).
4. Paul Nagel, *The Adams Women: Abigail and Louisa Adams, Their Sisters and Daughters* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1987).
5. See Leon Edel, *Literary Biography* (London: R. Hart-Davis, 1957); Leon Edel, *Writing Lives: Principlia Biographica* (New York: Norton, 1984); Anthony Friedson, ed., *New Directions in Biography* (Honolulu: Published for the Biographical Research Center by the University Press of Hawaii, 1981); Marc Pachter, ed., *Telling Lives* (Washington: New Republic Books, 1979); and Gloria From, ed., *Essaying Biography: A Celebration for Leon Edel* (Honolulu: Published for the Biographical Research Center by University of Hawaii Press, 1986). For more on biographers talking about their craft see Jeffrey Meyers, *The Biographer's Art: New Essays* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1989); Gail Porter Mandell, *Life into Art: Conversations with Seven Contemporary Biographers* (Fayetteville: University of Arkansas Press, 1991); Teresa Iles, ed., *All Sides of the Subject: Women and Biography* (New York: Teachers College Press, 1992); William Zinsner, *Extraordinary Lives: The Art and Craft of American Biography* (New York: American Heritage, 1986); Stephen B. Oates, ed., *Biography as High Adventure: Life-Writers Speak on their Art* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts, 1986); Norman Denzin, *Interpretative Biography* (Newbury Park: Sage, 1989); Eric Homberger and John Carmley, eds., *Troubled Face of Biography* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1988); Paul Murray Kendall, *The Art of Biography* (New York: Norton, 1965); Andre Maurois, *Aspects of Biography* (New York: D. Appleton and Company, 1929); Sara Alpern, ed., *The Challenge of Feminist Biography* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1992); and Ira Nadel, *The Development of English Biography* (London: Hogarth Press, 1959).
6. Michel Foucault, "What is an Author?," in Josué V. Harari, ed., *Textual Strategies: Perspectives in Post-Structural Criticism* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1979), 141.
7. Hayden White, *The Content of the Form: Narrative Discourse and Historical Representation* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1987).
8. Jean François Lyotard, *The Postmodern Condition: A Report on Knowledge* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1984).
9. Ronald Hayman, *Nietzsche, a Critical Life* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicholson, 1980).
10. Jacques Derrida, "Declarations of Independence," *New Political Science* 15(1986),

7-15.

11. John C. Miller, *The Wolf by the Ears: Thomas Jefferson and Slavery* (New York: Free Press, 1977).
12. Robert Dallek. *Franklin D. Roosevelt and American Foreign Policy, 1932-1945* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1981), and Robert Dallek, *Lone Star Rising: Lyndon Johnson and His Times, 1908-1960* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1991).
13. Anne K. Mellor, *Mary Shelley: Her Life, Her Fiction, Her Monsters* (New York: Methuen, 1988).
14. Seyla Benhabib, "Feminism and the Question of Postmodernism," in *Situating the Self: Gender, Community and Postmodernism in Contemporary Ethics* (New York: Routledge, 1992).

The Modern Elixir: Medicine as a Consumer Item in the Early Twentieth-Century Chinese Press

Eugenia Lean

From the late nineteenth century into the first half of the twentieth century, medicine was the consumer item *par excellence* on the pages of *Shen bao* and *Dagong bao*, two of China's first modern newspapers.[1] Advertisements for nutrition-boosting remedies, miracle pills, medicinal syrups, and ointments were ubiquitous, surpassing in amount ads for all other consumer items and luxury goods. This burgeoning commercial site commanded the casting, shaping, and molding of a narrative on modern medicine for urban China. In this paper, I examine the rise of the medicinal commodity to learn about evolving cultural understandings of modern science from the last years of the Qing period until the Japanese invasion in 1937. I argue that this development in print marketing not only created cravings for the pills and tinctures featured, but also wove gendered and semicolonial narratives of desire for science, modernity, and nationalism.

These narratives developed in a socio-political context of great turmoil and structural change. The turn of the century saw the collapse of the whole dynastic structure after peasant uprisings and repeated humiliation by Western imperial powers and Japan. Afterwards, the Revolution of 1911 did not bring immediate stability, as the Republican era was marked by internal military struggle among warlords and attempts by a weak and corrupt Nationalist Party (Guomingdang) to consolidate its rule. Semicolonialism also continued, rooted in extra-territorial concessions and treaty ports. Understandably, intellectuals were acutely aware of China's frail constitution and bemoaned widespread spiritual degradation. For many of these reforming intellectuals, science became the guarantor of modernization.

During the Self-Strengthening movement during the Tongzhi reign in the

1870s, Chinese statesmen had argued for a measured dose of Western science and technology. By the end of the Qing period many were learning how to build actual scientific institutions and educational facilities from missionaries or by going abroad.[2] At that time, intellectuals started to express the need for science as not simply technological innovation but as a modern way of thinking and as an ethos. May Fourth intellectuals in particular advocated the adoption of "Mr. Democracy and Mr. Science" for nation-state building purposes. Science became the spiritual panacea needed to scourge China's blood vessels of the crippling virus of Confucianism.

Medicine played a unique role in this intellectual discourse on Chinese modernization and science. First, such literary and political intellectuals as Lu Xun, Liang Qichao, Gu Jiegang, Guo Moruo, Xu Zhimo, Ding Ling, and Lao She, among others, employed the metaphor of medicine to speak of China's national and cultural condition. Second, reformist intellectuals committed to Western science and modernization were loathe to reject traditional Chinese medicine. Caution was taken not to modernize at the expense of being "Chinese." This reluctance was a product of the tension between the desire to be modern and national pride.[3] Similar to this conscious deployment of medicine in rhetorical strategies of elite nationalism, commercial texts and their visual images also placed medical science front and center in a more widespread cultural discourse on modernization.

The community of readers engaging in the commercial print discourse on medicine was undoubtedly still a very small educated urban minority in China's overwhelmingly agrarian population. They were not congruent with the above reform intellectuals per se, nor were they necessarily exclusive of them. Many elite intellectuals had their own exclusive forums for expression and they frequently attacked modern journalism for being blatantly commercial and sensationalistic.[4] On the other hand, as a source of daily news, many were undoubtedly avid readers. Newspaper consumers also included the post-gentry bourgeois elite[5] and the *xiao shimin* or so-called "petite bourgeoisie."[6] Thus this readership was a heterogeneous group, potentially bringing different readings to the developing discourse on science.

At the same time, the increasingly expansive reach of the print media served to draw these various groups together, presenting to them a single, albeit potentially multivalent, narrative.[7] Neither sent abroad nor taught by missionaries, most readers had not personally engaged in scientific endeavors. They came to know and desire science at least partially because of exposure to advertisements in China's growing consumer culture. The use of already familiar notions of physiology and alchemy was vital in making this new narrative less foreign and

more accessible. Traditional ideas about immortality and the natural world critically facilitated the rise of the medicinal commodity throughout this period. Readers witnessed and accepted the shift from turn of the century apothecary advertising of miracle drugs to the later, showier commercials for modern medicine.

Other narratives of modernity were embedded in these sales pitches. Knowledge about the close relationship between medical science and nationalism was disseminated to urban readers, reinforcing a larger discourse on modernization and nation-state building. Life-styles and modern identities were also on sale. The post-gentry urban sophisticate and the new public woman replaced nationalism as featured items by the 1930s. These new personae became naturalized and legitimate in print, but they were still ideal dreams perennially out of reach for most readers.[8]

The knowledge of and ability to consume modern science became a means to demarcate social standing. The Taiping Uprising (1851-1864) had generated mass dislocation and migration of both elites and peasants from the Yangzi delta into Shanghai, and provincial gentry-elites had been forced to shift their resources to Shanghai's new cultural and mercantile arenas. Old means to structure social status subsequently became obsolete and new ways had to be forged in the treaty-port context.[9] Many urban elites started to enlist knowledge about the commodity of science as solid new cultural capital. The ability to actualize these narratives and purchase advertised products further separated the truly elite from the rest.

By arguing that these narratives of desire played a part in constituting modern urban consciousness, I do not mean to suggest that buyers were solely victim to new advertising trends and marketing strategies. Advertisers, concerned with developing a market niche, promoting products, and making sales, had to tap into consumer demand as well as to recreate consumer predilection with multiple ad campaigns.[10] Led by their business acumen, they had to understand what was acceptable and what would make sense to their targeted audience, pitching their sales within discursive constraints. At times they egregiously transgressed what was tolerable. At other times, through sheer ingenuity and repetitive display, they successfully introduced new vocabulary and syntax to a developing urban discourse. This complex process infused the signs and symbols of these commercials with meaning, validity, and power, making them autonomous in the sense that neither consumer nor advertiser could completely control or define their significance.

These narratives also have implications for our understanding of the rela-

tionships among gender, science, and China's colonial experience. In this paper, my gender analysis takes its cues from several feminist scholars. Joan Scott, for example, provides me with a useful theoretical framework. She considers a primary task of historians to be the determination of historically specific ways in which politics constructs gender and vice versa.[11] More specifically, Evelyn Scott Keller focuses on "ideologies of woman, nature, and science" in her examination of science after the Scientific Revolution in Europe. Science was gendered male in contrast to the preceding "feminine" practices of magic and alchemy.[12] I follow a similar line of inquiry regarding gender and science for Republican China.

This inquiry will show that China's commodity culture of medicine actively constituted gender identities and new patterns of consumption behavior by the 1930s. As I argue below in my examination of the ads, the New Consuming Woman appeared as the key consumer and as a model for real female readers. In turn, these new gender roles informed the understanding of modern science and China's position in the age of imperialism. The unprecedented commercial pairing of the Chinese female consumer of science and the Western male provider dramatized the dissemination of scientific knowledge from male expert to female recipient, illustrating the power dynamic between the metropole and periphery.[13] This pattern of gendering was a colonial construct which had the effect of introducing Western standards to treaty-port China.

As my gender analysis suggests, I approach the development of science in China as a historically specific phenomenon. I am informed by poststructuralists such as Michel Foucault who adopt a more historicist approach to emphasize the particular contexts in which discursive "truths" or domains of knowledge develop as constituting power.[14] Recent postcolonial writings, starting with Edward Said's pioneering critique of Orientalism, have warned against the inherently colonizing tendencies of writing about cultures of the Other from the pulpit of Western academe. Taking heed of this caution, I also assume a postcolonialist position of historicization that is self-reflexive in its attempt to recuperate systems of signification that exist outside the categories of Western modernity.[15]

In this spirit, I map the semiotic representation of modern medicine that merchants, eager to hawk their wares, were crafting in the treaty-port print media. I historicize these Chinese advertisements that provided the gendered metaphors, frames of references, and patterns of verbal and visual expressions for the Chinese urban subject to conceptualize powerful constructions of modern science and medicine. Finally, I find that this narrative was a product of China's semicolonial moment, subverting complete cultural colonialism in its insistence to understand, at least partially, modern medical science from the

viewpoint of Chinese physiology and cosmology.[16]

Turning to the ads for miracle drugs, it is evident that around the turn of the century the commercial pages of the *Shen bao* proved to be the ideal advertising space for alchemists of all stripes. Most advertisements were commercial bulletins for companies such as pharmacy houses, trade companies, banks, booksellers, and insurance firms, rather than ads for a particular product. Apothecaries *(yaofang)* concerned with promoting their reputations were extremely aggressive advertisers. Postings by individual doctors *(daifu)* were also quite popular.[17] Many highlighted a specialty of the house or secret remedy; others simply posted their various potions, tinctures, mixtures, and powders.[18] Gradually, vendors grew to understand the power of the commodity and the ability of a single house specialty to attract customer attention. By the 1910s, urban China's consumer culture started to flourish and the commodity grew, eventually becoming larger than life. Its iconic representation became grander and flashier, dominating its advertisement. Featuring the commodity, these ads constructed a system of signification for consumerism that looked remarkably similar to Western systems.[19] By the early twentieth-century in China, the elixir, or miracle drug, was the advertising spectacle.

What exactly was the miracle drug? The boast of one typical 1900 advertisement can give us an idea: "To enjoy long life, have boundless sexual energy, cure one hundred illnesses, and develop a strong physique, take this pill."[20] Targeting all, men and women, young and old, ads for various *zhiyao* (curative medicine) and *yaowan* (medicinal pills) assured relief for ailments ranging from *mengyi* (nocturnal emission) by men to various sexual diseases of both sexes. They promised to regulate irregular menstrual periods and tame opium addiction. Some even claimed the power to revive the dead.[21] Most importantly, they were marvelous, inexplicable and divine. Ads labeled them "Wonder Item" *(miaopin)*, "Wonder Pill" *(miaodan)*, or "Divine Ball" *(xianwan)*. Some simply read "Wonder! Wonder! Wonder!" Some brazen advertisers appropriated the claims made by miracle drug vendors to promote goods outside the realm of alchemy. A 1905 advertisement sold jeweled electricity belts.[22] Easy to wear, it functioned like the elixir, able to miraculously cure those with disease and to improve overall strength for those without. One would most assuredly become the same with the strongman in the ads, emitting a glow of virility and looking forward to the privilege of *changming* (long life). Miracle drug commercials pledged everything, explained nothing, and were ubiquitous.

A perennial favorite among advertisers and buyers alike was the *buyao* (the nourishment tonic), which did not cure or mend, but primarily boosted, supplemented, and maintained. *Buyao* commercials made claims of fantastic and un-

Figure 1. *This 1890 Shen bao commercial is a common example of earlier Miracle Drug advertising. It features the Red-footed Immortal as a trademark.*

canny efficacy. For example, advertisers for the *buyao* called *Rendan* promised solace and relief from stomachaches, toothache, indigestion, overeating, anemia and weakness, vomiting, feeling faint, headache and dizziness, chills, hangovers, depression, and at least one hundred other possible complaints.[23] *Rendan* also reminded readers that it prevented future illness by expelling all poison from the body, and if necessary it revived one from the dead. The *buyao* was a true panacea.

Other miracle drugs were potions concocted to remedy specific problems. For example, the popular *Baidu* tablets or powder specifically treated venereal disease, promising to eliminate all visible symptoms, ease uncomfortable swelling and burning, and purge the body of disease. Moreover, *Baidu* was not going to sell the consumer short of miraculous side effects, improving general health and extending life in addition to curing gonorrhea. Pills for opium addiction similarly offered wondrous byproducts. Besides offering to end a habit painlessly, advertisers threw in pledges for a better appetite, an improved sex life, mental vigor, and longevity as part of the package deal.

Although clearly unabashed in making claims for their amazing merchandise, these miracle drug advertisements were not simply about the bravado of promotion. Consistent notions about the body, immortality, and cosmology appeared as well. Early *buyao* commercials presented a physiology far different from that familiar to the modern West. The modern Western body is often essentialized as a fixed and discrete unit, constituted by various anatomical parts and systems that can be dissected and known objectively.[24] It is a sophisticated machine with isolated parts occasionally in need of repair. Contemporaneous discourses, from schoolhouse health charts to Hollywood and billboard cultures obsessed with perfect bodies, constantly reinforce this "completeness."[25] This flesh-bound machine and its organs and skeleton were distinctly foreign to the Chinese reader in the early twentieth century. In the verbal text of commercials, a Chinese signifier for the corporeal "body" rarely if ever appeared. Visual imagery associated with early miracle drugs included rough, handdrawn merchandise containers marked simply by a brand name. At most, a figure of an immortal graced a container as a trademark promising longevity (Figure 1).[26]

The absence of a material body characterized the discourse and practice of

traditional Chinese healing. Its physiology featured a multiple "body," contingent upon "occasions of analysis and the purposes for which analyses are made," guiding clinicians and healers rather than representative of a material reality.[27] In turn-of-the-century print culture, the absence of a mechanical body did not mean the lack of a systemic conception of physiological activity. Physiology was organized conceptually around notions of interacting circulation tracts of lifeforce substances. Advertising rhetoric primarily targeted the maintenance of the harmony of these substances with disease resulting from a disturbance in their flow. Constant refrains of regulating *qi*, harmonizing one's *yin* and *yang*, and nourishing one's *jing* essence, echoed throughout.

Qi is a difficult notion to render into English and is often inadequately translated as "pneuma" or "matter-energy."[28] It referred generally to the material essence of the Chinese cosmos and was imagined variously as a concrete gaseous flow or as a more tenuous, nonperceptible energy. Its harmonious and unblocked circulation was crucial for cosmological and political harmony in various political and philosophical discourses.[29] With the body as the microcosm of the universe, the forces dictating the physiological function echoed those of the larger political cosmos. Though *qi* flowed separately in individual people, animals, and inanimate objects, including China's bureaucratic society, these separate flows were still interconnected and part of a universal *qi*. Thus, just as the emperor had to ensure free-flowing Heavenly *qi* to prevent political and moral chaos, the individual had to maintain his or her own *qi* for mental and physical well-being. Almost all miracle drug advertisements targeted *qi* circulation explicitly as vital to general health and vigor.

Another fundamental aspect of Chinese cosmology was the dual forces of *yin* and *yang*, whose interaction and balance constituted and regulated the functioning of all natural phenomenon including human physiology. These two forces were centerpieces in the sexual and procreational economies of imperial China. *Yin* was the force characterized by the feminine, darkness, the moon. *Yang* represented the masculine, light, the sun. They were not thought of as binary opposites defining male-female sexuality, which is more reminiscent of modern Western philosophical and sexual discourses. Rather, sexual differentiation depended upon the configured distribution of both fluid forces.[30] Men had more *yang* and woman had more *yin*.

Several discourses privileged *yang* over *yin*. Daoist alchemical traditions identified *yang* as the source of vitality and life, unlike modern biological and medical discourses of the West that identify the ovum as primary.[31] The solid manifestation of male *jing* was to be expended only when there was the possibility of progeny. Otherwise, the goal was not only to conserve but to replenish. *Yin*, on

the other hand, was a threatening force sapping men of their virility and *yang*. Much of popular Chinese literature depicted the female *yin* as insatiable and dangerous in its excess.[32] This belief is also scattered throughout Chinese official historiography. From the historical account of Bao Si, the beloved concubine of King You of the Zhou, to the beauty Yang Guifei, the beloved concubine of the Emperor Minghuang, women with excessive *yin* prompted the political failures and deaths of their lovers and political chaos at large.

Modern popular advertising strategies continued to rely on many of these assumptions of procreation, using threats of *yin* and *yang* imbalance to sell their products. For men, *yang* depletion would mean enervation, weakness, and in extreme cases, the inability to produce *jing*, the seminal essence for procreation. Products such as *Guangsi jindan*, or the Golden Pill for Multiple Descendants, prevented such dangers.[33] Some ads spoke directly of *bujing* (the nourishment of *jing*), conveying the need to replenish especially after nocturnal emission or *mengyi* (literally, the loss of dreams). For women, *yin* imbalance was dangerous. Irregular menstrual periods would result with the serious possibility of not being able to get pregnant. Several *buyao* pledged *yin* nourishment, pregnancy, and even a male child. The long-running ad for *Fuke jiangsheng dan*, which spanned from as early as the 1910s into the 1930s, warned against the imbalance of a water and a cold womb, all danger signals of excess *yin*.[34]

Along with *yin* and *yang*, the system of "five elements"—wood, fire, earth, metal and water—was essential to Chinese physiology. These elements were less physical substances and more qualitative phases of cyclical processes fundamental to the Chinese view of the natural world.[35] By the Former Han period, the "five elements" came to correspond to the physiological activity of five visceral domains of the body, each governed by specific internal organs.[36] This physiological schema influenced early advertisers of various pills and cordials. Many vendors repeatedly targeted the same few organs, with the kidney and spleen being especially popular.[37] These were not isolated parts of a whole body in need of repair, but crucial governing agents for the working of a set of physiological processes. Once nourished, they served to offer relief from various ailments, maintain an unchecked flow of *qi*, and generate vigor.

Along with these key tenets of Chinese physiology, long-standing faith in elixirs of longevity *(changshou)* not only dominated *buyao* advertising but were crucial in ensuring their popularity. The Daoist discourse was the primary cultural milieu in which Chinese immortality and the belief in alchemical means to achieve it developed.[38] The Daoist cult of the *xian* (the immortal), popular after the fourth century, sought for a distinctively material renewal in which the body was necessary for deathless existence on earth and for ascension as a per-

fected immortal to the administrative ranks of the heavens.[39] Esoteric potions were concocted from various metallic and mineral substances to stimulate artificially *yin* and *yang* juices and to invert the natural course of bodily decay.[40]

Notions of Daoist adepts, powerful elixirs, and eternal youth were not restricted to a canonical Daoist discourse, but occupied popular cultural imagination throughout Chinese history. From official histories to fiction, accounts portrayed the Daoist adept as the key person in the quest for immortality. Dynastic histories dating to the medieval Warring State's period recorded incidents in which the politically powerful accidentally ended their lives by imbibing poison and mercury for the reckless sake of rejuvenation.[41] Most famous perhaps is the legend of *Qinshi huang*, the first emperor of the Qin dynasty, who sent a mission to the eastern islands in search of means to guarantee eternal life. This resulted unexpectedly in the founding of Japan—without immortal glory for the son of heaven.

The elixir and its maker have been infused with multiple moral meanings in Chinese literary history as well. In *wuxia xiaoshuo* (martial arts novels) and in their predecessors, Tang dynasty *chuanqi* (the tales of the strange), heroes rely constantly on various efficacious wonder drugs *(lingdan miaoyao)*.[42] These heroes consume wonder drugs to preserve their youthful complexion, achieve long life, and most importantly, supplement their fighting skills, all for the ultimate pursuit of martial righteousness *(xiayi)*. The elixir facilitated martial and moral superiority. On the other hand, many literary figures who associated with Daoist adepts suffered fatal results. In his quest for sexual immortality, the crass and greedy hedonist, Ximen Qing, overdoses on some alchemical mixture while vainly attempting to arm himself against the insatiable female *yin*. The ingestion of an elixir often resulted in tragic disaster and death perhaps because immortality was associated with immoral greed and excess, two nearly inexcusable and deeply rooted sins of Chinese literature.[43] Whereas the desire for long life was morally permissible, the lust for a deathless existence was often rendered excessive.

By the end of the Qing period, the miracle drug was legitimate and culturally significant to consumers as the latest manifestation of a long line of Chinese alchemical elixirs or *waidan* used in the pursuit of immortality. Merchants were doing all they could to entice, lure, and even deceive readers to accept promises of mineral-facilitated renewal and purchase cherished notions of longevity and male heirs. Long life became available to all who had the knowledge and the means to buy. Immortality became a salable commodity in China's rising culture of consumption.

By the 1910s as China's commodity culture took flight, there were signifi-

Figure 2. *"Every Picture Tells a Story" states this 1920 Shen bao commercial. Imperialist dispensers recognized the power of images and the symbolic capital of Western goods.*

cant shifts in the semiotic landscape of advertising. Pills and potions bottled and labeled as "science" increasingly eclipsed the early *buyao* elixirs. Though the Western trademark symbolized trustworthiness, expertise, and quality in ads as early as the 1890s, these later advertisers were more thoroughly repackaging their products as modern pharmaceutical goods.[44] Actual Western products, such as Dr. Williams' Pink Pills for Pale People, Doan's various Tonics, Angier's Emulsion, and Chamberlain's Painkiller, also increased markedly (Figure 2).

Western and Westernized products acquainted the Chinese reading populace with new disorders and maladies. With its aggressive marketing, Odol's World Dentrifice introduced successfully the unprecedented condition of tooth decay.[45] It presented bad breath and dirty teeth as a regrettable condition that only Odol's could properly remedy. Another example was armpit odor *(huxiu)*. Perspiration had not been seen as something to be "treated" until its frequent mention in 1930 advertising. These ads for Western products exhibited an array of new health problems to the Chinese and enticed them to buy.

The anatomical and dissected Western body became a noticeable icon and an object at which to gaze in the 1910s. Advertisers isolated, highlighted, and "extracted" organs from the body for inspection and reader edification. Bits and pieces of the body never known to the consumer before were severed and identified as potential trouble spots. This new body was invaded microscopically, divided minutely, and displayed proudly for sale. For example, makers of Doan's ointment included pictures of swollen and infected body parts, isolated and bodiless.[46] The consumer was repeatedly reminded with graphic detail how even the most infinitesimally small part of the body could potentially go awry and that Doan's could offer relief.

Textual cues also blazed the new contours of the body. Sales pitches explained exactly how the body should be conceptualized, renaming, mapping,

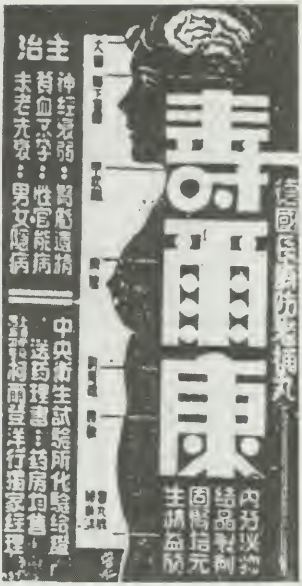

FIGURE 3. *This ad for Shou'erkang longevity powder placed the anatomical Western body, its brain tissue and explicitly labeled glands (from the pituitary to the pancreas) on display for the urban reader.*

and categorizing organs and body parts (Figure 3). By the late 1910s scientific notation and labeled diagrams appeared everywhere. Advertising language started to include scientific terms of glands, diseases, and conditions. In the 1920s advertisers were employing pithy statements similar to "proven effective" (e.g., *zhuzhi xiaoyan*) to sanction their wares. One full-page 1936 ad for *Shou'erkang* made claims to objectivity and scientific standards, the stamps of approval sought by increasingly "informed" consumers.[47] It included "before" *(jia)* and "after" *(yi)* photographs of a lab rat who had grown from weak and emaciated to fat and healthy after an injection of *Shou'erkang*. The image of the lab rat was clearly borrowed from Western medical culture to signify scientific expertise and knowledge. The advertisers used photographs as documentation of the truth-value of the product. These new icons replaced older means of legitimating medicine, including personal recommendation and reputation.

The debut made by the modern professional scientist as a new cultural hero in the 1930s was significant as well. Bespectacled and distinguished looking, he (invariably it was a he) worked in his lab coat or in Western clothing, mixing, titrating, measuring, and conducting experiments.[48] He was always gracious when passing medical knowledge onto the consumer. The "traditional" Chinese doctor or *daifu* also appeared at this time (Figure 4). In the typical format of personalized confessions of Dr. Williams' Pink Pills for Pale People advertisements, a contemporary doctor recounted the glorious tradition of medical arts while flanked by two *daifu* dressed in classic garb and headgear.[49] The scientist was now validated by a long indigenous genealogy and heritage.

Early twentieth-century advertising witnessed competing claims for the understanding of the natural world. By the 1930s commercials for both apothecary house specialties and the more visually striking ads of modern medicinal commodities were present, with the latter increasingly relegating the former to secondary, less prominent space. Western discourse on modern science did not completely overtake the discourse on the natural world presented in earlier *buyao*

Figure 4. *The construction of a heritage and medical tradition as symbolically represented by the image of the* daifu *was part of the crafting of a narrative of modernity in these medical commercials.*

advertising, however. Merchants were clearly still selling the modern pharmaceutical as a miracle drug. Early Republican vendors dressed miracle elixirs in the costume of modern science while ideas about Chinese physiological processes, *buyao,* and eternal life persisted partially tucked away in the fine print.

Like their late imperial predecessors, the modern products of medical science continued to guarantee *bushen* (the supplementing of one's spirit) and *qiangjing* (the strengthening of one's *jing).* They promised to remedy weak *jingshen* (life-spirit), prevent aging, strike against hidden illnesses, ensure pregnancy for women, and cure nocturnal emission for men. A 1935 *buyao* ad perfectly expressed this coexistence of old and new.[50] The central image was a stark silhouette of the female body (Figure 3). The brain tissue was drawn in and various glands, from the pituitary to the pancreas, were identified. Despite the Western iconography, the product being sold still functioned as a longevity elixir, promising above all the regulation of wayward *qi.*

These persistent ideas about substance flows and immortality were significant because they rendered new icons of the Westernized body and modern medicine sensible to the reading public. This marketing strategy essentially collapsed science and Westernization into the synecdoche of a pill that was remarkably similar to earlier *buyao.* By so doing, it facilitated the importation and sales of Western pharmaceutical goods that began in the 1900s and inundated the urban markets by the 1910s and thereafter. It also played a crucial role in carving out critical conceptual space for a constellation of unprecedented narratives that were to be associated with modern medicine.

The burgeoning sentiment of nationalism was one of the most noticeable new narratives. By the 1910s, the modern pill or panacea teemed in meaning with previously unknown connotations of national strength. In 1915, nationwide boycotts of Japanese goods occurred after Japan issued to China the Twenty-one Demands, egregious and humiliating calls for reparations payment. In 1925, boycotts of the British followed the May Thirtieth incident in which the British had opened fire on Chinese citizens. More boycotts happened in 1927 and 1931 to protest Japanese imperialism in Northern China. These elixir advertisements predated these nationalistic boycotts and thus were not simple shows of patriotism. They were active participants in the spinning of a commercial narrative on nation-state building that, while reinforcing a general discourse on nationalism, offered its own version—with the modern elixir as the centerpiece.

Advertisers represented China as a nation-state with its own national merchandise and national citizens. Unprecedented references were made repeatedly to *Zhongguo* (China) and *Zhonghua* (the Chinese Republic). Many promoted their medicinal products as *guohuo* (national goods) and *guoke* (national science). The image of the new Chinese citizen also emerged.[51] Usually always male, he was dressed in modern garb, often waving the national flag. He both sold national merchandise and was a role model for readers.

At this time the individual body was clearly being identified as the microcosm of the nation. Individual health was rendered as crucial to national strength. One 1915 ad for a nourishment juice visually portrayed this intimate relationship by directly superimposing large, black characters, "brain boosting, heart-strengthening potion" *(yinao buxin zhi)*, onto the clear characters, "Countrymen, love your nation" *(quan tongbao aiguo)*.[52] The country's plight was to be treated with medicine just as human illness was treated: "From ancient times until now, there has never been a situation where as people, we are strong and the country is weak. This then is the role of *yao* (medicine)—how can it not be important?" A 1915 ad for the Rising Sun Pill similarly offered to "cure illness and alleviate the nation."[53] Intake of this pill minimized both the internal *luan* (disorder) of the individual's body and that of the national body. For the Chinese populace, the message was clear: a strong nation required strong bodies, attainable through the purchase of national *buyao.*

Immortality also gained new significance in the era of nation-states. A few advertisements explicitly coupled immortality with the health of the nation. A 1920 ad for *Xiandan,* literally "the Drug of Immortality," assured protection against multiple diseases and promised the nation eternal life.[54] This pill of pure *yang* enabled both personal longevity and national immortality. Its nationalistic vendors enjoined citizens to buy the domestic product made out of Chinese

Figure 5. *"Why go far..." asks this 1925 Shen bao advertisement. Instead, good health can be acquired easily from your local apothecary. These later ads explicitly narrated the act of consumption.*

medicine rather than foreign goods. Desire for an immortal nation state could be sated with the patriotic purchase of China's modern elixir.

Besides constructing narratives on medical science and national strength, print advertising engaged in the making of the individual consumer and a cosmopolitan bourgeois lifestyle. During the final few decades of the Republican Era, commercials fixed the new language and images through which Chinese could express their modern personalities. Dramatic shifts in the gendered meaning of consumption accompanied these developments. The consumer went from being a male patriarch representing the household unit in early advertising to an individual urban female buyer of the 1930s.

Appearing primarily before the 1910s, the earliest consumer of print advertising was the Chinese household as represented by the patriarch. Speaking on behalf of all members of the household, he gave personal testimony to the efficacy of the showcased elixir and conveyed to readers exactly how the advertised drug aided in crucial family matters. In several ads, the patriarch, who had taken the responsibility to assure the existence of the next generation by buying the featured *buyao,* expressed his family's gratitude and

happiness with its success. The ability to produce a male heir was not simply the problem of the daughter-in-law or wife, but that of the whole family. Conspicuously absent was the individual consumer, male or female.

Ads started to address and target individual consumers rather than the full household after the 1910s. They often placed the consumer as an object of the readers' gaze and consumption. The prominently displayed virile strongman or the plump healthy child in *Weiluo* nourishment juice ads demonstrated what could happen if readers simply made the right purchase.[55] Other ads showcased a well-coiffed person along with the pharmaceutical product.[56] Not only did the dignity of the person featured guarantee the value of the product, but his dignity was also on sale. These later advertisements carefully differentiated each product's appropriate buyer. For example, an offspring of Dr. William's' Pink Pills called "Baby's Own Tablets" spoke about the urgent need for specialized medicine targeting unique infant health problems.[57] By placing portraiture with the caption, *(nü)hai gongzi* (the Child Prince), these advertisers envisioned and visually affirmed that the child was a separate consumer with unique needs and vulnerabilities. Pharmaceutical goods were no longer *buyao* effective for all.

Increasingly the featured consumer was no longer simply an idealized object of consumption desire but became a subject that the reader could identify with. Pictures vividly depicted discomfort with which the reader could sympathize. One man grasped his head with both his hands, clearly suffering from a migraine.[58] Another was bending over in pain from a backache.[59] Men and women were seen in active poses, directly applying balm to a sore spot or taking a calibrated dosage. These ads presented images of the consuming Everyman or Everywoman experiencing commonplace ache and discomfort.

By the 1930s what I call "lifestyle ads" were prevalent, stringing together a full narrative of the urban bourgeois consumer's way of life. Not simply images with which readers could identify, they were snapshots of comfortable "everyday life" that constituted a complete cosmopolitan identity for sale. In a popular 1930s Vitaspermin commercial the ideal urban couple was out for a romantic evening at the theater, but the man imprudently dozes off.[60] He had obviously neglected to take his Vitaspermin, leaving himself susceptible to exhaustion and unable to enjoy the perks of cosmopolitan privilege. Constantly working, playing sports, going to the theater, and traveling to far away lands, the consumer fully appreciated this bourgeois lifestyle only if he bought the advertised good.

Merchants presented these images to the reader as desirable and very possible despite their often being difficult to emulate in actuality. Some images were clearly out of reach for the majority of urban readers. For example, the

jockey racing at the colonial outpost of the Shanghai racetrack first appeared in advertising in a 1925 ad for longevity powder *(shoufen)*.[61] Though the Chinese participated in horse racing as spectators, they were not permitted to participate in the sport. Many Chinese, including ordinary urbanites, went to watch, enjoying it more as an occasion to gather rather than as a sport. Ultimately though, it was still a colonial activity and the Chinese observed with a spectator's gaze the meanings of colonial modernity embedded in the event and the track.[62] Readers gazed at the horse racing icon of medicinal advertising along with other representations of Western leisure. These all became symbols of modern treaty-port urbanity, achievable through a simple purchase.

Consumption itself became a commodity and identified as part of this new urban lifestyle. Ads depicted customers entering stores and leaving satisfied with handfuls of medicine. One 1925 Emulsions sales pitch assured readers that health as a desirable commodity could be obtained at the neighborhood pharmacy (Figure 5).[63] The accompanying image displayed a well-dressed person, suggesting that his dignity could be yours as well with this purchase. Another 1925 pitch for Doan's Cough Syrup *(Dou'an)* placed itself within its own *Shen bao* ad (Figure 6).[64] Two sick people were curiously observing a large billboard advertisement of Doan's cough medicine, coughing and clutching their necks as if mirroring the man on the billboard. This ad-within-an-ad method made the process of identifying with the act of consumption explicit. Another man pointed at the billboard, advising the sick ones to purchase quickly and seek relief. Advertisers encouraged literal mimicry hoping to elicit sales.

In addition to this proliferation of "lifestyle ads," the consuming woman entered most majestically and came to reign in the late 1920s and 1930s. Previous ads had already acquainted consumers with *fuke*, the health care of female reproduction, and the miracle drugs used to regulate menstruation and fertility.[65] As mentioned earlier, the *buyao* narrative primarily constituted reproduction as the concern of the whole household rather than as a private matter for the woman. The woman as an individual, whether as an independent consumer or as the key object of sale, emerged forcefully into the public space of consumption only in these later years.

The 1930s public consecration of women as the bourgeois consumer was significant considering the history of women in imperial China. Elite imperial women were rarely public consumers of medicine. Men dominated orthodox and public practice of medicine, always characterized by the textual presence of medical classics. Women, on the other hand, were active consumers and deliverers of other types of health care within the confines of the family compound. Behind closed doors, women established all-female health networks, with many

FIGURE 6. *Vendors of this 1925 Doan's Lung Tonic were not just selling a product, but also the act of pharmaceutical consumption as part of Chinese modernity.*

elite women preferring female midwives and healers, often Buddhist nuns, over proper male doctors *(daiyi)* chosen for them by their fathers or husbands.[66] Female publicity or activity outside the inner quarters of any type was a hotly contested moral issue. Nonelite women in public arenas (such as courtesans and Buddhist and Daoist nuns) were always favorite targets of elite men, gatekeepers of various moral discourses. When elite women of the Jiangnan area started to be more active in literary activity and production during the late Ming period, they too became objects of frequent male criticism.[67]

By the turn of the twentieth century, female publicity again became an avidly discussed topic. Prompted in part by urbanization, missionary-initiated female education and proposed anti-footbinding reforms, post-Taiping Rebellion gender dislocation resulted in a cacophony of voices debating and redefining proper female behavior. Early twentieth-century elite modernization and reform commanded many new gender narratives that for the first time insisted upon female publicity. May Fourth intellectuals rendered the woman's body a crucial public cite upon which to contest the meaning of China's national and modern fate. They placed female liberation at the crux of Chinese moderniza-

Figure 7. *In this 1935 Dagong bao advertisement, the pharmaceutical product was rendered as crucial for the constitution of the new modern cosmopolitan family. The commercial advises parents to buy this panacea to keep themselves fit and thus the entire family healthy.*

tion and juxtaposed the cloistered, foot-bound female victim as a metaphor for traditional China's plight. It was not until the arrival of the commercial heroine of the 1930s, however, that a public woman was presented as a social norm. This public woman was no longer simply a patriotic creation of a tiny handful of elite intellectuals, but the urban Everywoman, the New Consuming Woman. She was far more dominant than her male counterpart, the consuming Everyman, demanding tolerance for a new female identity that was sexy and appealing and that revolved around consumption.

From one vantage point, advertisers still appropriated these female images to sell products. The sophisticated, seductive woman became a common sight, purposely placed as an object for the male gaze. A 1935 advertisement for Doan's skin ointment that specialized in treating skin infections, rancid sores, tender inflammations, and foot fungi, featured a female icon which lacked any apparent association with the ointment.[68] Her presence suggested to men that buying this particular brand would reduce their skin problems, increase their sexual attraction, and very likely end in possession of similarly beautiful women. Women were among the exhibited items to be consumed.

From another vantage point, these advertisements crafted a female consciousness and gendered subjectivity, providing real women with the look, the attitude, and the cultural capacity to purchase. The Doan's saleswoman, for example, was a model of modern femininity and sexuality. She was loaded with seductive power and appeal and provided a possible look for female readers to copy. Advertisers were bold and creative, defining various other unprecedented poses and roles. The modern woman was also the capable mother,[69] the bourgeois housewife, the caring spouse,[70] the nurse and the patient,[71] and the confident and independent cosmopolitan woman.[72] These numerous images together constituted the complex personae of the New Consuming Woman which female readers were to covet and emulate through purchase.

These ads had high hopes for the woman's aptitude in her various new roles. An ad for Pinkettes' tablets for constipation featured the housewife busily boiling water on a modern stove.[73] She was elegant, with a bobbed haircut and high heels even while donning an apron in front of a hot stove. It was with the simple consumption of a tablet or two that the housewife could maintain her composure and poise against the discomforts of constipation.

One of the more prominent identities for the New Consuming Women was as a representative of the rising bourgeois urban family. The family was no longer a traditional multigenerational household represented by the male patriarch. Vendors now froze nuclear families in action poses from their modern urban lives and identified the mother as the principal consumer (Figure 7).[74] The infrequent commercial that singled out the husband did so only to remind him to think of his tired wife, whose health had to be supplemented to ensure the health of the family.[75] The housewife became the primary buyer and icon of consumption in a newly configured household division of labor.

These commercials also instructed female readers in the requirements of the maternal role with assurance that it was not difficult with the correct medicinal commodity. Beyond simply producing male children, as required in earlier ads, modern motherhood was now longer, marked by various stages, and by more opportunities to buy. The process began with pregnancy. Construed as a vulnerable time during which there was the likelihood of becoming frail and sick, pregnancy required special preventive medication. The postnatal period was also precarious. Merchants made postpregnancy *(chanhou)* tablets readily available for supplementing lost blood and fundamental *qi (yuanqi)*.[76] During infancy, the concerned mother, often breastfeeding her sickly child, sought relief with various pharmaceutical products. The single child then became a flock of two or three school-aged children who begged for cough syrup to comfort a

sore throat or for ointment rubbed on their inflamed calves. The modern mother performed these duties easily.

The 1930s New Consuming Woman who dominated the pages of the *Shen bao* and *Dagong bao* was a complex creature of consumption. Central to her identity—whether she was representing the new urban family or was single, independent, and sexy—was the modern elixir. In addition, she became increasingly demanding over time. As the ads provided the identity for real women to consume, actual female consumption undoubtedly started to affect actual sales. She was not solely an object of advertiser manipulation but also became a subject to inform and demand how medicine should be sold.

China saw medical practice organized increasingly as a professional field by the early twentieth century.[77] Medicine was no longer scattered health-care practices interwoven into everyday culture and ritual. This organization of medical practices and discourse was part of the larger trend whereby China was gradually developing the notion and institutions of *kexue* (modern science). Unfortunately, scholars in the past have tended to depreciate mass culture, obscuring the importance of consumption in the development of *kexue.* This paper attempts to show that the ubiquitous commercials for the elixir were critical in disseminating knowledge about and creating desire for modern science in China. Pharmaceutical merchandise was repackaged, covered in scientific labels, and labeled with Western trademarks. Health and modern medicine became integrally related to an unprecedented discourse on nationalism and to new gender and elite subjectivities. Professional scientists appeared everywhere as heroes.

Besides playing a crucial role in this constitution of *kexue,* medical advertising, particularly its gendered imagery of the 1930s, is revealing for China's complex colonial experience. Whereas the consumer of science was the modern Chinese woman, the provider of science was male, and often a Western male. In one 1935 commercial for Santal Midy pills, a popular remedy for venereal disease, the male doctor dressed in Western attire handed a roll of tablets to the distinctly Chinese female patient (Figure 8).[78] With his back to the reader, the doctor appeared stern, confident, and chastising while still providing for and educating the nonplussed woman. Lu Xun had similarly used the literary image of syphilis to describe his country's spiritual state, suggesting that the core of China was rotting and that it had become congenital. Unlike Lu Xun's bleak diagnosis, this advertisement depicts China, the female patient infected with venereal disease, heading in the right direction by choosing to consume modern medicine. Vendors offered hope for improvement with their products. Nor were Japanese merchants going to miss the opportunity to manipulate effective colo-

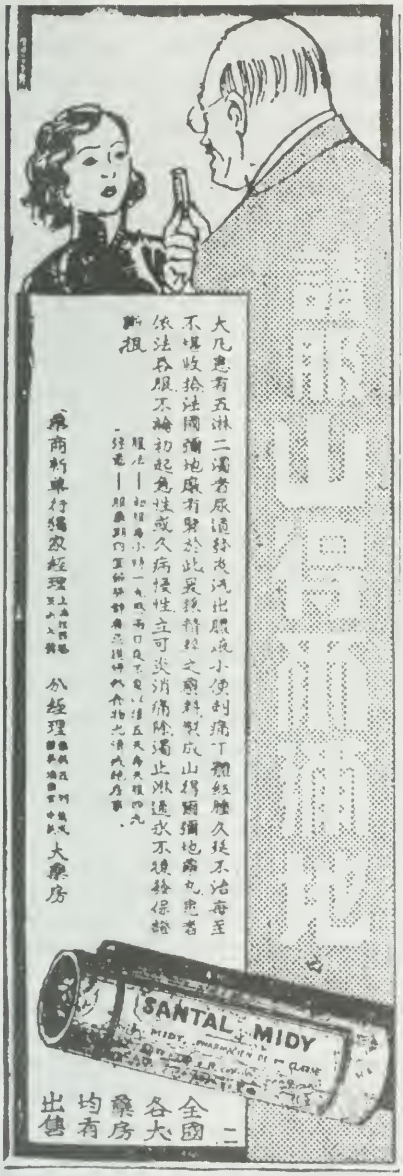

FIGURE 8. *This 1935 Santal Midy commercial expresses metaphorically the passing of modern medical science from a masculine West (the Western male doctor) to a feminine consumer, China (the Chinese female patient).*

nial and gendered imagery. In an ad for *Rendan*, Japan's most popular product in the Chinese market, a Japanese colonel (an obvious symbol of Japanese imperial expansion) was ceremoniously handing a packet of *Rendan* to a Chinese woman in common dress.[79] The visual narrative of both these ads represents the gendering in these commercials at large: feminine China buying and receiving medical and scientific enlightenment from a masculine West.

China's desire for modern science was partially a product of cultural imperialism. China was not completely complacent and passive, however. Like the New Consuming Woman, China was both colonized object and demanding subject, and in this way a truly semicolonial agent. Imperialist dispensers of pharmaceutical goods and Western medical science had to grapple with tenacious and long-standing ideas about the function of *buyao*, immortality elixirs, and cosmological assumptions from *yin* and *yang* to *qi*. Western narratives were relatively limited in their ability to thoroughly transform pre-existing Chinese discourses on health and physiology. The urban Chinese continued to constitute modern medicine and science at least partially on their own terms.

Acknowledgments. I would like to thank Professor Benjamin Elman, Amy Thomas, and the editorial staff for their critical comments and suggestions. Thanks also must go to my parents, Alice and Eric Lean, for their humor and unflagging patience with my undoubtedly painful translations.

Notes

1. *Shen bao* was first published in 1871 under foreign guidance in the treaty port of Shanghai. *Dagong bao* was established in 1902 in the treat port of Tianjin. Both were mainstays in urban print culture of the Republican era.
2. Though early contacts between Chinese and Western medicine started before 1600 and were maintained steadily by Catholic missionaries during the early and mid-Qing, the intensification of medical missionary work did not really begin until after 1840. The formation of systemic medical training for the Chinese was initiated in the 1880s and expanded significantly after 1900. See K. Chimin Wong and Wu Lien-teh, *History of Chinese Medicine: Being a Chronicle of Medical Happenings in China from Ancient Times to the Present Period* (Tianjin: 1936; reprint, Taipei: Southern Materials Center, Inc., 1977). James Reardon-Anderson also identifies the end of the Qing period as significant with the development of modern chemical and scientific institutions. These new institutions were structurally distinct from previous imperial organizations of alchemy. See Reardon-Anderson, *The Study of Change: Chemistry in China, 1840-1919* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991).
3. Ralph C. Croizier, *Traditional Medicine in Modern China: Science, Nationalism, and the Tensions of Cultural Change*. (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1968).
4. Leading intellectual Lin Yutang wrote a history of public opinion and the press in 1936, decrying the decadent state of Chinese journalism and identifying the *Shen bao* as the worst offender. See Lin Yutang, *A History of the Press and Public Opinion in China* (Shanghai: China Institute of Pacific Relations, 1936).
5. This group included many of the gentry that moved into treaty-ports in the wake of the Taiping Rebellion. Some transferred their previous wealth and status into merchant and industrial activity and became wealthy industrialists and the urban bourgeoisie. Others were simply cultural elites, without much economic capital, trying to start new cosmopolitan lives.
6. Perry Link identifies the *xiaoshimin*—neighborhood merchants and local entrepreneurs—as readers of "middlebrow" culture, including Butterfly fiction and daily newspapers, in his *Mandarin Ducks and Butterflies: Popular Fiction in Early Twentieth-Century Chinese Cities* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California, 1981).
7. The late imperial period and Republican Era saw the rise of print media. Commercial papers in particular were widespread. The *Shen bao* reached a daily circulation of 150,000 at its height in the 1930s. Advertising space accordingly expanded over time along with the rise in circulation. See Lin, *A History of the Press*.
8. These commercial narratives shaped and constituted buyer consciousness and craving rather than reflected actual consumption behavior. See Roland Marchand's introduction in *Advertising the American Dream: Making the Way for Modernity 1920-*

1940, (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1988). He argues that advertisements do not accurately reflect material or social reality, but distort reality, like a funhouse mirror, to fabricate the American dream, an ethos of the future.

9. Previous means to determine provincial gentry status, including land ownership, participation in classical scholarship, and the civil service examination, were clearly far less effective in urban arenas, although the wealth of the gentry elite helped many invest in new ways of defining urban elite status.
10. Stephen MacKinnon shows that treaty port newspaper editors consciously imitated the Western press's advertising and circulation strategies. As a result, the print site became increasingly entrepreneurial and both foreign and Chinese merchants took advantage of this to sell their goods. See MacKinnon, "Towards a Comparative History of the Chinese Press in the Twentieth Century" (Los Angeles: Printing and Culture in Late Imperial and Modern China, Southern California China Colloquium, February 1995).
11. Joan Scott, "Gender: A Useful Category of Historical Analysis," *American Historical Review* 91 (1986): 1053-1075.
12. Evelyn Scott Keller, *Reflections on Gender and Science* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1985), especially chps. 2 & 3.
13. Turn-of-the-century English advertisers specially targeted and constructed the middle-class female consumer as well. See Thomas Richards, *The Commodity Culture of Victorian England: Advertising and Spectacle, 1851-1914* (London: Verso, 1990).
14. Michel Foucault, *The History of Sexuality,* vol. 1 (New York: Vintage Books, 1990).
15. Nicholas Dirks advocates the use of "ethnohistory." See Dirks, *The Hollow Crown: Ethnohistory of an Indian Kingdom.* 2d ed. (Ann Arbor, Michigan: University of Michigan Press, 1996), xiv - xix.
16. China's semicolonial experience was very different from the colonialism in countries like India. China did not experience complete colonization and imperialists were limited geographically, economically, and politically to treaty-ports. Without central control of cultural mechanisms such as the education system, imperialists were limited in their cultural reach as well. This is not to say though that cultural colonialism did not take place. On the contrary, the West exerted a great deal of cultural influence in treaty-ports especially through collaborative treaty-port journalism and its advertising space.
17. For example, in 1890 a typical day's layout had seven pages dedicated to commercial postings and only three to news. A typical advertising page had up to nine apothecary and *daifu* postings out of a total of 20 ads. E.g., *Shen bao* , 21 February 1890, 7.
18. Both types of commercials are ubiquitous. See any advertising page, e.g., *Shen bao,* 21 February 1890, 7.
19. Thomas Richards argues that turn of the century advertisements in England were crucial to the creation and reproduction of the power of the commodity. He identifies them as "the focal point of all representation, the dead center of the modern world," central to capitalism's semiotic consolidation over England. See Richards, *Commodity Culture,* especially the introduction. As mentioned above, Chinese mer-

chants imitated foreign advertising strategies. One strategy, I suggest, was the representation of consumerism and its fetish with the commodity.

20. *Shen bao,* 12 January 1900, 7.
21. *Shen bao,* 8 May 1905, 7.
22. *Shen bao,* 6 May 1905, 8.
23. *Shen bao,* 4 January 1910, 6.
24. There is a tremendous amount of literature on the history of the body in the modern West. Perhaps best known is the work of Michel Foucault. See for example, his *The Birth of the Clinic: An Archaeology of Medical Perception* (London: Tavistock Publications Limited, 1973).
25. See for example, Arthur Kroker and Marilouise Kroker, "Panic Sex in America" in *Body Invaders: Panic Sex in America*, Arthur Kroker and Marilouise Kroker, eds. (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1987).
26. A frequently seen "trademark" was that of *Chijiao daxian* (the Red-footed Immortal). E.g., *Shen bao,* 5 March 1890, 6.
27. See Judith Farquhar, "Multiplicity, Point of View, and Responsibility in Traditional Chinese Healing" in *Body, Subjectivity, and Power in China*, Angela Zito and Tani Barlow, eds. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1994), 78-99.
28. Joseph Needham attempts to translate it into "matter-energy" and then suggests it is best to leave it untranslated. See Joseph Needham, ed. *Science and Civilization in China: History of Scientific Thought* (Cambridge, England: Cambridge University Press, 1956), 2:472.
29. For example, in the political and philosophical discourse of Song Dynasty *lixue, qi* was the material essence, whereas *li* was the nonmaterial patterns of the universe, including the higher phenomena of both the mind and social life. Ibid., 472-3.
30. Disorderly configuration of *yin* and *yang* was used to explain biological anomalies in human beings in imperial medical texts. See Charlotte Furth, "Androgynous Males and Deficient Females," *Late Imperial China* 9:2 (1988a): 1-31.
31. Daoist texts identify *jing* as the seed of procreation, which mixes with female *qi* to produce the embryo. Needham, *Science and Civilization* , 2:41.
32. Late Ming fiction depicted an inordinate amount of female *yin* as treacherous, depleting male *yang.* Many of these tales morally advocated the exercise of caution against excessive sexual intercourse. See Keith McMahon, *Causality and Containment in Seventeenth-Century Fiction* (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1988).
33. *Shen bao,* 22 January 1918, 7.
34. *Shen bao,* 24 December 1918, 14.
35. Needham, *Science and Civilization* , 2:243.
36. Judith Farquhar calls these domains "visceral systems of function." Based loosely around an organ, these systems rule certain bodily functions and not one system is more determinative than the other. Rather, they "interpenetrate both spatially and temporally" as "uncentered ... subsystems of concrete physiological and pathological activity" with a material basis that rejects any notion of fixity or discreteness. See Farquhar, "Multiplicity, Point of View, and Responsibility," 84-86.
37. The spleen governs transmission and transformation, elevates clear fluids, and commands blood flow. It is affiliated with the stomach. The kidney system acts on

fluids and marrow and accepts *qi.* It stores *jing* (semen) and is affiliated with the urinary bladder. Ibid., 85.

38. The *Daozang* (the classic scriptures of Daoism) contains many of the earliest texts and recordings of alchemical activity.
39. Though their goal was to ensure material immortality, Daoist alchemists did not neglect spiritual eternity. Chinese material immortality incorporated the notion that a person's soul was to live forever within the artificially sustained physical body. See Joseph Needham, *Science and Civilization in China: History of Scientific Thought* (Cambridge, England: Cambridge University Press, 1956), 5:71, 93.
40. The Daoist adept also conducted physiological alchemy or *neidan* (internal alchemy), cultivating breathing exercises, tumbling through gymnastic moves, and employing inventive sexual techniques. Like their alchemical potions, it was means to adjust *yin* and *yang* proportions to attain long life. Needham, *Science and Civilization,* 2:139-153.
41. See Joseph Needham and Ho Ping-Yü, "Elixir Poisoning in Medieval China" in *Clerks and Craftsmen in China and the West*, Joseph Needham, ed. (Cambridge, England: University of Cambridge, 1959), 316-339.
42. See Ye Hongsheng, "Dantan Wuxia xiaoshuo de lailong qumai" [A Discussion on the Origin and Development of Martial Arts Fiction], *Lishi yuekan* 75 (1994): 75-80.
43. See McMahon, *Causality and Containment,* which explores how even in literary pieces known as vulgar and pornographic, the final moral message advocates the reigning in of greed and excess.
44. These earlier ads tended to rely more on traditional means of legitimation. Apothecaries and doctors made claims that their products were passed down through generations as an old family secret concoction. Because word of mouth was another form of cultural capital, many of these bulletins were personal testimonials.
45. *Shen bao,* 1 November 1925, 16.
46. *Shen bao,* 1 July 1930, 10.
47. *Shen bao,* 20 January 1936, 18.
48. E.g., *Shen bao,* 7, 20 January 1936, 16, 18.
49. *Shen bao,* 5 January 1936, 11. One carried the symbolic *hulu,* a gourd used by doctors to carry their various powders and medical herbs.
50. *Dagong bao,* 7 January 1935, 7.
51. E.g., *Shen bao,* 9 July 1920, 16.
52. *Shen bao,* 8 December 1915, 8.
53. *Shen bao,* 1 November 1915, 6.
54. *Shen bao,* 8 August 1920.
55. *Shen bao,* 4 January 1913, 14.
56. E.g., *Shen bao,* 25 November 1913, 14.
57. *Shen bao,* 8 August 1920, 21.
58. *Shen bao,* 11 September 1925, 14.
59. *Shen bao,* 23 December 1913, 3.
60. *Shen bao,* 10 January 1936, 13.
61. *Shen bao,* 4 November 1925, 7.

62. In his "Shanghai Before Nationalism," *East Asian History* 3 (1992): 33-52, Ye Xiaoqing emphasizes the equal footing of spectators, Chinese and foreign, elite and commoner, at the racetrack in his attempt to demonstrate the lack of anti-foreignism in pre-twentieth century Shanghai. His analysis may be too sanguine as he failed to contextualize his source, the *Shen bao,* itself a collaborative effort between treaty-port Westerners and elite Chinese journalists interested in presenting Chinese and foreigner harmony. Yomi Braester's analysis of the track and its spectators in "Economies of Modernity: The Social and Narrative Spaces of the Shanghai Race Club," *Modern Chinese Literature* (forthcoming), is more similar to mine, rejecting an innocuous reading of the track's significance. Analyzing writings by Liu Na'ou and Mu Shiying, two authors of the School of New Sensibilities, he argues that the Shanghai racetrack plays a crucial role in ordering the "economy of desire" in Chinese modernity. This space was an urban metaphor that creates an illusion of excitement and lighthearted gambling and the simulacrum of agency, concealing the more unpleasant aspects of modernity and capitalism such as alienation. I suggest it also repressed aspects of cultural colonialism.
63. *Shen bao,* 4 November 1925, 7.
64. *Shen bao,* 4 November 1925, 15.
65. Ads for *fuke* medicine spanned the entire period I reviewed from 1890 until 1936. The literal translation of *fuke* is "the science of women." Contemporary renderings include "gynecology." An interesting project would be to trace the subtle changes in the discursive meanings of *fuke.*
66. Christopher Cullen has taken the lead investigating the history of this cloistered culture of female medicine. With a dearth of materials, he has been forced to take creative routes and use literary texts, such as the famous imperial novel, *Dream of the Red Chamber (Honglou Meng).* See his, "Patients and Healers in Late Imperial China: Evidence from the Jinpingmei," *History of Science* 31:2 (June 1993): 99-150.
67. Some conservative scholars reacted with alarm and concern that China's moral fiber was being seriously weakened. See Susan Mann, "*Fuxue* (Women's Learning) by Zhang Xuecheng (1738-1801): China's First History of Women's Culture," *Late Imperial China* 13.1 (June 1992): 40-62. Of course sympathetic male relatives and friends played crucial roles on occasion, delivering letters to other "inner quarters," editing and printing female literary works and anthologies, and convening coed poetry circles. See Dorothy Ko, *Teachers of the Inner Chambers: Women and Culture in Seventeenth-Century China,* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1994) and Ellen Widmer, "The Epistolary World of Female Talent in Seventeenth-Century China," *Late Imperial China* 10 (December 1989): 1-43.
68. *Dagong bao,* 6 January 1935, 6.
69. E.g., *Dagong bao,* 6 January 1935, 6.
70. E.g., *Shen bao,* 21 January 1936, 15.
71. E.g., *Shen bao,* 7 January 1936, 7.
72. E.g., *Shen bao,* 21 January 1936, 15.
73. *Shen bao,* 29 July 1930, 7.
74. E.g., *Shen bao,* 1 January 1936, 23.
75. *Shen bao,* 5 July 1930, 8.

76. E.g., an advertisement for *Bailingji* in *Shen bao*, 27 August 1925, 4.
77. By this I don't mean to deny that there did not exist a practice and knowledge of what we now call *zhongyi* (traditional Chinese medicine). However these practices of Chinese medicine were organized and categorized as a unified system only after its binary opposite, *xiyi* (Western medicine), was introduced.
78. *Dagong bao*, 7 January 1935, 7.
79. *Shen bao*, 1 February 1918, 14.

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Memory and the Mississippi: The Authority of Artifacts at Auschwitz-Birkenau

Tamara Zwick

In a short essay, titled "The Site of Memory," the novelist Toni Morrison describes her work as an attempt to extend, fill in, and complement slave autobiographical narratives. Reflecting upon her craft, she contends that no matter how much a writer's work may be the product of imagination, the act of imagination itself is bound up with memory. Morrison explains the complex relationship between imagination and memory through a metaphor deeply rooted in the southern black experience. The Mississippi River, she says, was "straightened out" so as to make room for people's homes and farms, yet occasionally it floods in these places. Flooding is the term people use to describe the river's physical action, but to Morrison it is also the river remembering. She continues:

> All water has a perfect memory and is forever trying to get back to where it was. Writers are like that: remembering where we were, what valley we ran through, what the banks were like, the light that was there and the route back to our original place. It is emotional memory—what the nerves and the skin remember as well as how it appeared. And a rush of imagination is our "flooding."[1]

Morrison's approach is an intuitive one; it is anything but rational and scientific. And yet, her method is not so unlike that of an historian who represents the past "as it really was." That is to say, Morrison's understanding of the river and slavery implies an appreciation of history, and accompanying histories of persecution, as phenomena that might be broken down and understood as discreet experiences, distinct both from one another and from the flow of history. History, according to Morrison, is characterized by particular experiences that stand out more than others, thus creating a hierarchy of events. When the river

floods, it does not comprise part of a new hybrid of the past and the present, but rather is physical evidence that something definitive happened there *before*. This definitive conceptualization of the past "as it really was" is very similar to the critique which Jean-Francois Lyotard levels against French classical scholar, Pierre Vidal-Naquet, regarding his book, *Assassins of Memory.* [2]

According to Lyotard, historians such as Vidal-Naquet argue from a perspective of realism. They purport to uncover in a past fraught with complications, shifting alliances, divergent powers and heterogeneous contexts, the simple truth of what happened. This "realism," for Lyotard, is restrictive. He argues that the study of history is more complicated than merely asserting one's objectivity by avoiding "political projects of legitimation and perpetuation." He says:

> It is never a mistake when historians, exposed to that memorial-forgetful history, reach for their books, search the archives, put together documents, and subject them to an internal and external critique and reconstruct, as one puts it so innocently, what has *really* happened.[3]

It is in this manner that "history-as-science" purports to take hold of the past, as if its strict methodological principles enable the historian to read the minds of the dead perhaps even more easily than it might those of the living. Such an "objective approach," Lyotard contends, is able to escape the "forgetting" maintained by "edifying history" (history that instructs by example). And yet, he continues, it produces a new "victim" (his word), an appropriate choice of terms, given the subject matter of both Morrison and Vidal-Naquet's respective theses. This new "victim," continues Lyotard, is "consciousness" as manifested by an illusory scientism. "Consciousness," can be understood more properly as a state of being "unconscious-preconscious."[4] It is not a concept to which fixed notions of science and process might be applied. Following from this, a simple irony becomes apparent in Vidal-Naquet's treatment of revisionist historians who deny the genocide of the Jews and the memory of those who die. His critique is guilty of defending a notion of objectivity which elides the heterogeneity of history, thereby impoverishing the very history he endeavors to preserve; in this sense, he commits his own form of paper assassination.[5]

Both Morrison and Vidal-Naquet propose a common theme. Truth, whether in the form of that which eternally reemerges or that which can be meticulously recovered, exists outside of particular interests as if it were a "scientific fact" or natural phenomena. As such, it survives the contingencies and vicissitudes of the moment, living beyond temporal and historical contexts. This paper, while sympathetic to Morrison and Vidal-Naquet's attempts to maintain a connec-

tion to and memorialize the experiences of their respective ancestors, will take issue with the notion that truths—as situated in particular sites, the memorial floods of rivers or authentic documents—can be separated from the changing historical contexts within which they are found and reformed.[6] Seen from this perspective, it becomes all the more important to understand that the physical structure and relics held within the former concentration and work camps of Auschwitz-Birkenau are part of a "material truth" subject to physical decay and the displacement of meaning caused by shifting political and cultural contexts. Certain of these contexts preceded the existence of the camps themselves; others inevitably follow it.

Auschwitz as a concentration camp is but one version of the "truth" of Auschwitz-Birkenau. In this sense, it is multivocal: it is part of the daily lives of the Polish Catholics who live (and lived) in Oswiecim[7]; it is a final resting place for those who died there and a cemetery for those who remember them; it is a symbol of anti-semitism for some and of Polish martyrdom for others[8]; it has been used to speak for the corruption of capitalist societies and made a paradigm for universal evil[9]; it is a museum around which questions of preservation are raised and deliberated[10]; it is a holy site for a convent; it is a place around which historians and demagogues assert their versions of the past "as it really was" or as it was fabricated to be; it is a place both to be forgotten and always to be remembered.[11]

In addition to the relationship between Morrison's and Vidal-Naquet's mutual assertion of an unrevisable past, a second theme unites them. This is the notion that material evidence (whether documents or floods) can be used as evidence of a past that others would intentionally distort. In Morrison's case, the distortion begins with the history of American slavery and the silencing of slave voices by the white power structure. For Vidal-Naquet, the threat is not one of suppression, but of a revision that would erase the memories of victims and survivors in the present. Rather than "straightening out the river," revisionists manipulate and rearrange by taking documents and testimony out of context. According to Vidal-Naquet, this distortion of evidence revises the truth of the past itself. Yet, in a sense, the same charge could be leveled against Vidal-Naquet, for in memorializing site(s) such as Auschwitz as signifiers of the Holocaust, he construes them so narrowly as to obfuscate the diversity of truths they have and continue to represent. This essay will attempt to escape this dilemma by focusing on issues raised by an architectural analysis of Auschwitz-Birkenau, on the cultural monuments and every day life in Poland, and on various contemporary discussions of museology.

In his work, Geoffrey Hartman asks the reader to conceptualize the process

of public memory in the next century. In his view, public memory is closely associated with museums, but he immediately problematizes this notion of public memory by questioning whether or not museums "resurrect" the past or merely "give it a decent burial."[12] Implicit in this juxtaposition of ideas is the sense that museums have a function to educate, whether through a pedagogic task of narrative, or a restorative aim to memorialize. Such a responsibility belongs not just to museums, but to literary, historical and filmic modes of representations (as well as to other types of public memorial), for these mediums are increasingly—indeed inevitably—replacing the eyewitness testimonies of those who survived the Third Reich's efforts to destroy European Jewry. Perhaps it is this transitory aspect of the present which most influences the manner in which the past has been treated in recent scholarship.

The publication of works pertaining to memory and the Holocaust has exploded of late, and with it, a variety of attitudes, ranging from the possibility of salvation to pessimism and despair have developed.[13] This new historiography, comments Lawrence Langer, moves from a stage of historical writing struggling with *what* happened (the providence of historians) to *how* to remember it (the providence of our own imaginations).[14] Though this distinction is somewhat simplistic, it raises an important question as to the public or private nature of memory itself. According to Langer, memory, unlike history, "can be a very private adventure."If memory is indeed a private experience, it certainly cannot sustain such a characterization when installed and exhibited in a public display. This is the case with the camps of Auschwitz-Birkenau, for though they would seem to present an unmediated objective past, much has been and must continue to be reconstructed. That such transformations need occur is related as much to physical issues determined by the deterioration of the structures and objects held within, as it is to the radical political, social, and economic transformation in post-war Polish history.

Between history and imagination, there is a third possibility which Langer does not consider: mainly, *why* do we need to remember in the first place. This is not to ask why one would bother to represent the past; rather, it is a question of the particular motivation that is part of the territory of each memory project undertaken. Perhaps it can not be examined without some discomfort, for it implies that there is an agenda involved in such an analysis—in other words, that it is not about the objective representation of the past, but about very particular concerns in the present. Whether explicitly stated, tacitly suggested, or somewhere in between, this question emerges from discussions of the camp of Auschwitz and its past, present, and future ties to the town of Oswiecim. Just as accounts by survivors seem to elide, conflict with and alternately correspond

with one another, so too it is difficult to achieve any consensus on the symbolic place and "mythic status" of Auschwitz-Birkenau.[15]

Yet attempts to narrativize events which occurred at Auschwitz-Birkenau are inevitable as the physical site and relics preserved there deteriorate. As recent films by Steven Spielberg, Claude Lanzmann, the opening of two major new museums in the U.S., and a forty-two million dollar investment to renovate and maintain Auschwitz all demonstrate, new personal, cultural and economic interest has been dedicated to memorializing the Holocaust.[16] As a result, increased attention has also been focused on Auschwitz and its museum staff. "Today the whole world is watching what we do in here," claimed museum director Jerzy Wroblewski in an interview with a *New Yorker* journalist in November 1993, "But for the last forty years nobody cared about Auschwitz."[17] According to Wroblewski, the museum faced grave financial limitations until very recently, and certainly before the fall of the Berlin Wall. Various decisions had to be made so that the site did not fall into total collapse. While "painfully aware of questions of authenticity" and the fact that such decisions might better have been made in a larger forum, Wroblewski explains, something had to be done at the time, or "there would be nothing left today."

A larger assembly did finally take place there in August 1993 when a group of approximately thirty conservators, architects, historians, religious leaders, and government representatives from the United States, Western Europe, and Israel gathered at the Auschwitz Museum to confer with museum administrators regarding the future of the site.[18] The conference was titled, "The Future of Auschwitz: Should the Relics be Preserved?" This small roundtable meeting took place in the fashion of a dialogue rather than a formal conference with the presentation of papers. Participants agreed in advance to refrain from circulating meeting materials due to what Jonathan Webber described as the "potential sensitivity of the subject."[19] In a discussion with Timothy Ryback at the *New Yorker*, a participant described some of the most important issues raised at the gathering. According to Detlef Hoffmann, a German professor of art history and an organizer of the conference, the question of function was of primary importance: "The museum staff must ultimately decide what the place is supposed to be." Hoffmann argued that the identity of Auschwitz might alternately be described as a memorial, a museum, a cemetery, even a place to educate, or as some combination of them all. An interrogation of function seems an understandable place to begin a dialogue. A discussion directed to the proposed handling of a museum by officials would seem by definition, however, to be limited to a selection of actions to be taken. After all, Auschwitz is and will continue to operate as both a museum and a state institution. Even the title of

the conference betrays this bias, by articulating a yes or no question. In effect, the site was a priori conceptualized as a place with a function *in the present* because the conference was assembled in the first place to better establish (or revise) just what this might be. Indeed, whatever the discussant's opinions, however, it is an inevitable fact that time will pass, that things will fall apart, and that the physical presentation of Auschwitz at any given moment will change. Or, as Witold Smrek, the Museum's chief conservator explained, "[W]e are trying to preserve everything we can, but we can do only so much. The problem is that nothing lasts forever."[20]

If one designates Auschwitz-Birkenau a museum and a place to educate, it certainly does not fit conventional discussions of didacticism, authenticity and preservation. That there is a "senseless reverence" endowed upon objects merely because of their authenticity, as argued by David Horne, does not seem an appropriate criticism in this particular case.[21] That is to say, while reverence might not be the appropriate gesture, for example, toward the tons of human hair preserved by the museum, neither is its sanctification unreasonable. However, Horne's contention that there is an "overriding concern with authentic objects in conventional history museums" does seem applicable to this discussion of the Auschwitz Museum in general.[22] Through an exploration of an analogy between collecting artifacts and writing history, Horne expresses his uneasiness with the authority generated by the "authenticity" of relics. Artifacts are displayed in museums as if to tell a story by themselves which would be the equivalent of a situation in which historians simply produced volumes of random and unedited documents rather than authoring narratives.[23] "What," Horne asks, "can these museums do that books cannot do better?"[24] One might consider further, he suggests, the quality of a presentation given a situtation where no objects were available to begin with, therefore making necessary and legitimate the use of facsimiles and photographs.

Perhaps it is precisely the relationship between the object and *objectivity* itself that renders such fragments unique in terms of their interest to the public. Despite the variety of significations such artifacts might represent across testimonies, academic analyses and controversial disputations, one cannot contest their genuineness as *remains*. In this sense, they bear witness to a past just as the Mississippi "floods." Similarly, one might speculate that as testimony necessarily yields to representations, the importance of these physical remnants increases. They are, indeed, a form of evidence to the recent past through their incontestable linkage to events, and even to individuals. "A picture is worth a thousand words", states Geoffrey H. Hartman in "Public Memory and Modern Experience", "only because it endows those words with the illusion of immediacy and

self-evidence."[25] In this manner, it is our own presence in interpreting images and objects (and texts) that lends them an aspect of subjectivity. Hartman's comments are not unlike those of James Young, who has drawn attention to the meaning invested in memorial sites by successive generations.[26] To visit such places is to make a pilgrimage of sorts, suggests Horne. But, he continues, this "European" pilgrimage to the monuments of fascism is undertaken as a part of a horrible past which is "never the present, never the future."[27] Hence, the singular contexts of such visits lend to the experience an even greater degree of subjectivity.[28] In keeping with Lyotard's comments above, it is as if the museums themselves are like the historians who "put together documents. . . . and reconstruct, as one puts it so innocently, what has *really* happened." The arrangement of objects, whether preserved, reconstructed, or re-created, are their own formal composition. As people from outside the daily routine of the Oswiecim community view them, they cannot maintain an innocence unmediated by either the purity of their presentation or by the material quality of the objects they offer.[29]

Ultimately, memory is a selection process, and monuments of stone are "built on quicksand" in that they are constructed upon an ever changing set of concerns.[30] As Andreas Huyssen has observed, a society's memory is negotiated by its beliefs, values, rituals, and institutions.[31] Memorials are impermanent to the extent that they are subject to the politics of the day. Indeed, this seems readily apparent in the case of those who would voice the "Auschwitz Myth." Other monuments are "ossified," Huyssen continues, "either as myth or cliche." With the passage of time, they lose their original meanings and significations. He asks whether it even make sense to oppose memory and forgetting, "as we so often do, with forgetting at best being acknowledged as the inevitable flaw and deficiency of memory itself?"[32] There is always an inevitable degree of forgetting intrinsic to remembering. Indeed, if everything were truly frozen against time by virtue of its "authenticity,"or, as James Young suggests, preserved "almost exactly as the Russians found them forty years ago,"there would be no need for the deliberative interventions of conservators, architects, historians, religious leaders, and government representatives in the first place.[33] The paradox between realism and re-presentation is, of course, inherent to the deliberations themselves.

Even as a cemetery, Auschwitz-Birkenau cannot escape from a subjective connection to the present, as cemeteries are themselves memorials for the living to revisit the dead. The nature of a graveyard or burial ground is distinct from a site of archaeological excavation; it is a site of deliberate exhibition rather than of discovery, even when such a designation is proclaimed ex post facto.[34] Fur-

ther complicating the matter, one might consider the fact that Birkenau itself was built on a bed of ruins. James E. Young states that "For their massive extermination center, the Germans razed the Polish village of Brzezinka. . . . Thus what the Germans would call Birkenau was itself built on the site of a demolished village."[35] Ultimately, by separating Auschwitz-Birkenau from a traditional resting place for the dead, its "occupants" can only be remembered at best in the abstract. It is impossible to know exactly who died and where. Indeed, even if the victims were all recorded somewhere, it would not mediate the omission of those customs generally observed at cemeteries immediately following the time of death. In cemeteries, people are laid to rest with rituals: They are buried along side family and their loved ones with some recognition of their past and the future of those who survive them. They are not, quite simply, abandoned.

Auschwitz-Birkenau has been fixed against a particular narrative in that it has been reconstructed and renovated according to the plans of the Warsaw Culture Ministry. "Unlike most monuments in the world," said ministry official Bohdan Rymaszewski, "Auschwitz was never intended to last."[36] This raises an important dilemma: by and for whom, in the most immediate senses of community and geography, are relics preserved in a country that is ninety-five percent Catholic?

To some extent, museum officials have been able to "stabilize" the deterioration of certain materials (brick, concrete, wood, leather and paper) against the elements of time. Other forms of erosion cannot be so easily suspended. The deterioration, scavenging, and subsequent reconstruction of wooden barracks demonstrates well the link between time, place, and representation at Auschwitz-Birkenau. As explained by Wroblewski, who is currently responsible for the preservation work done at the camps, many of the experts gathered at the conference in 1993 criticized the fact that the museum staff had built foundations made of brick for the wooden barracks. During the war, these temporary buildings sat directly on the ground. Wroblewski argued that if he had followed the advice of some conservators to leave the structures in their original state, the wood from which they were made would certainly have rotted. In effect, without the museum's manipulation of this "evidence" it would have ceased to exist.[37] Furthermore, even with such reconstructions, a variety of transformations persisted nevertheless. Anticipating the arrival of the Red Army in late November of 1944, the Germans lit several barracks on fire. Upon reaching Birkenau, the Red Army patrols themselves were compelled to burn down several more barracks in order to prohibit the spread of disease. Additional barracks were taken apart by homeless locals at the time desperate for building materials and

firewood.[38] More recently, a windstorm tore apart yet another barrack at the camp.[39]

Yet ultimately, these problems of reconstruction at Birkenau (Auschwitz II) have little resonance for the vast majority of visitors to the camps, as most never make the five minute walk there after having viewed the reconstructed museum site at Auschwitz I.[40] Ironically, most Jews killed at Auschwitz-Birkenau (which is made up of several different locations) never even set foot at Auschwitz I, let alone died there. Nor did many see, for example, the infamous metal sign stating that work makes one free ("Arbeit Macht Frei"). Indeed, the sign itself has been made to appear as the initial entrance point to the nether world of the concentration camp by the museum tour, although this was not originally the case.[41] (I will return to this subject later.) Hence, the tension between the desire for material evidence to confirm the established central narrative, even as illusion, and the unalterable effects of time is cultivated.

Auschwitz, after all, was not built to last. "The Germans built the camp with the intention of exterminating an entire race and then destroying all the evidence of this deed," comments Rymaszewski, "Everything was poorly made—the barracks, the crematoriums, the paper used for documents. It is difficult to preserve something that was made to vanish."[42] In preserving a sense of authenticity around that which was constructed to fall apart, Young comments that people are invited "to mistake remnants of the past for events themselves, physical evidence for almost any accompanying explanations."[43] The "icons of destruction," in a sense, come to represent the dead to which they once related.[44] Even the memorial of Morrison's river demonstrates a similar phenomena: the river floods *occasionally*. It does not ever make a permanent return. This is not to say that evidence of the past does not remain in some forms. In order to represent such memory, however, narrative inevitably takes the place of authenticity.

A second problem of renovation presents itself with Crematory I at Auschwitz. With this, the dilemma presented is not one of exposure, but rather a crisis of expectations. "When Auschwitz was transformed into a museum after the war," explain Deborah Dwork and Robert Jan van Pelt, "the decision was taken to concentrate the history of the whole complex in one of its component parts."[45] Hence, the crematories at Birkenau (mainly in ruins), where most of the mass annihilations had taken place, were designated to be too far away for a "memorial journey." Crematory I was thus reconstructed at Auschwitz I so as to represent the history of the other site just a few kilometers away. This recreation included a chimney, four hatched openings in the roof (presumably for Zyklon-B), and two furnaces. "There are no signs to explain these restitutions," continue Dwork and van Pelt, "[and] the guides remain silent about it when they

take visitors through this 'palpably intact' building that is presumed by tourists to be the place where *it happened*."[46] In fact, such a gas chamber did exist at Auschwitz I in 1942. By 1943, however, all of its furnaces had been dismantled. A year later, the structure was converted again into an air-raid shelter with an emergency operating room, and it was in this state that the Red Army presumably would have found the building.[47] The Crematory at Auschwitz I is but one example of the variations and adjustments that have taken place. In another instance, the principal building through which prisoners of Auschwitz I experienced a myriad of humiliations upon first arrival—"the metamorphosis from *Mensch* to *Untermensch*" according to Dwork and van Pelt—became the modern reception center "with a restaurant, cafeteria, post office, money exchange, cinema, book shop, conference room and hotel."[48] Such transformations and rearrangements, whether motivated by practical or political concerns, betray a level of necessary and/or intentional falsification inherent in presenting objects in the present as if to demonstrate the ultimate truth of the past. In the meanwhile, some changes clearly cannot be suspended. It is to this final predicament which the last of these brief illuminations turns.

At Birkenau, a small pond is concealed behind some trees just a few paces behind the ruins of Crematorium IV, which was itself dynamited in 1944 by an uprising of inmates. A sign indicates its contents: it is called the "Pond of Ashes." Before the liberation of the camps, this water served as a dumping ground for the mass of human remains taken from the incinerators at the nearby crematorium. The fate of these bits and pieces of bone resting in this muddy site, unlike some of the other remains, cannot possibly be debated or reconciled. The contents of the pond cannot be preserved.[49] Meanwhile, according to Young, Polish teenagers "fish quietly on the bank of a little pond behind the crematoria, its shallows still white with human ash." They do not mean harm, Young notes, because "Our memory space is, after all, their city park and state preserve." Local Poles are automatically a part of a memorial process which "reinforces prejudices" and "feeds distrust."[50] That is to say it is an unavoidable circumstance that the horror of such a site is understood differently in terms of one's relation to it. To an extent, Young argues, a place only remains sacred by virtue of the distance between its past and our present. Sites retain a certain symbolic importance precisely because we do not live *there*. For the Poles who live in Oswiecim and neighboring villages, the "pilgrimage" in and through the grounds of Auschwitz-Birkenau is a daily experience. Poles understand the place in the context of a daily routine rather than a once-in-a-lifetime encounter. "It is part of a larger place called Polska," continues Young. He observes that, by contrast, "we memory-tourists tend to see not only Auschwitz through the lens of its

miserable past, but all of Poland through the image of Auschwitz itself."[51] In the end, it is not the contemplation of young people fishing in an ashen pond of human remains that is ultimately so disturbing; but rather the absence of the people who once lived there that is so much more horrendous.

In a story about a recent journey in search of an old synagogue in Kazimierz, Poland, Young comments on a formerly Jewish town in which Poles still speak a smattering of Yiddish which they learned from their former neighbors.[52] When Young's Polish friend asked a local girl where the synagogue was, she replied that "the cinema is there." Young's friend clarified, "No, not the cinema . . . . the synagogue is what we're looking for." The young girl, who had properly understood the question, simply replied that "the synagogue is the cinema." Indeed, behind the movie screen, a frame for the holy ark remained. Later, the teenagers of the village could be overheard discussing the previous night's film at what they referred to as "the synagogue." "What the villagers may have forgotten," concluded Young, "their language still remembers, if only as a dead metaphor." The decision to place a cinema in this former house of prayer, according to the local movie manager, was made with the Jews in mind. Locals agreed that such a space could not be used toward a practical end such as a restaurant or work place. Instead, the synagogue was designated a "monument to culture," and thus a cinema. In fact, earlier plans had at one time been considered to renovate the site to its original purpose or turn it into a Jewish museum. These plans were abandoned, however, because the community felt that without any Jews left to visit a synagogue, or Jewish museum, such an endeavor would be pointless. Also, there was no film-house in Kazimierz. In a country with only a few thousand Jews and nearly that many official memorials to them, Jewish memory projects must invariably be undertaken and expressed in Polish (not Jewish) ways, with their respective problems of language, visitation, construction, and finance, all posing significant obstacles in the balance between sensitivity and touristic consumption.[53]

What will ultimately become of the "official" memorial at Auschwitz is uncertain. The Pond of Ashes, however, will most likely be identified in the distant future as nothing more than a simple pond. "All water" as Morrison says "has a perfect memory and is forever trying to get back to where it was." In the case of the Pond of Ashes, however, "where it was" before the construction of Birkenau is *specifically a place which does not oppose forgetting*. In this sense, its former "reality" would contain no evidence of the past in the way that Morrison makes claims about the history of slavery and "flooding." The memory represented by the pond is only sustained by the locals, conservators, historians, and the like who continue to remember it — not by the water itself. Its truth is not

naturally recurring in any way. Perhaps writing history is like that: to an extent, *forgetting* where we were in the act of remembering is "the route back to [our] original place," because memory is inherently selective. In a sense, one must ignore most of the past as well as the future of the pond in order to mark the importance of events which took place across just a few years. The "rush of imagination," which Morrison likens to a flooding of truths, is rather then a reflection of the prejudices inherent in our selection processes as we remember history.

Notes

1. Toni Morrison, "The Site of Memory," in *Out There: Marginalization and Contemporary Cultures,* ed. Russell Ferguson, Martha Gever, Trinh T. Minh-ha, and Cornel West (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1990), 305.
2. Pierre Vidal-Naquet, *Assassins of Memory: Essay on the Denial of the Holocaust,* trans. Jeffrey Mehlman (New York: Columbia, 1992). Vidal-Naquet is director of the Centre Louis Gernet de Recherches Comparees sur les Societes Anciennes at the Ecole des Hautes Etudes en Sciences Sociales in Paris. He is also the author of the well-known essay "Un Eichmann de papier," (translated in the work cited above) which is an attack on "revisionist" historian Robert Faurisson's attempt to deny the existence of death camps during the Second World War.
3. Jean-Francois Lyotard, *Heidegger and "the jew,"* trans. Andreas Michel and Mark S. Roberts (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1990), 9.
4. Lyotard, *Heidegger and "the jews,"* 9.
5. For examples of "holocaust deniers," see writings by Arthur R. Butz, Robert Faurisson, Paul Rassinier, and works published by the Paris publisher, "La Vielle taupe."
6. Pierre Vidal-Naquet's text opens with a dedication to his mother who was killed at Auschwitz. Morrison's aforementioned essay ends with the following statement in the first person: "Still, like the water, I remember where I was before I was 'straightened out'."
7. See James Young, *The Texture of Memory: Holocaust Meanings and Memorials* (New Haven, CT: Yale, 1993), especially Part II.
8. On anti-semitism and Polish martyrdom, see especially James Young, "Jewish Memory in Poland," in *Holocaust Remembrance: The Shapes of Memory,* ed. Geoffrey Hartman (Cambridge, MA: Blackwell, 1994); Wladyslaw T. Bartoszewski, *The Convent At Auschwitz* (New York: George Braziller, Inc., 1990); "Thinking About the Six Million: Facts, Figures, Perspective," in *Holocaust: Religious and Philosophical Implications,* John K. Roth and Michael Berenbaum, eds. (New York: Paragon House, 1989); Deborah Dwork and Robert Jan van Pelt, "Reclaiming Auschwitz," in *Holocaust Remembrance*; and Timothy Ryback, "Evidence of Evil," *The New Yorker* (15 November 1993): 68-81.
9. On the subject of Polish national identity and Marxist-Leninist ideology, see Zbynek Z. Stransky, "Museums in Post-Communist Countries," *Museums in Europe 1992,*

Susan Pearce, ed. (London: Athlone Press, 1992), 174-186. See also James Young, "Jewish Memory in Poland", in *Holocaust Remembrance: The Shapes of Memory*, 230. On the notion of Auschwitz as a universal metaphor for evil, see Lucy Dawidowicz in *The Holocaust and the Historians* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard, 1981), 16-19.

10. See especially Timothy Ryback, "Evidence of Evil"; James Young's book of memorials, *The Texture of Memory*; and Deborah Dwork and Robert Jan van Pelt, "Reclaiming Auschwitz," in *Holocaust Remembrance.*
11. See, for example, Andre Neher, "The Silence of Auschwitz" and "Thinking About the Six Million: Facts, Figures, Perspectives," both in *Holocaust: Religious and Philosophical Implications.* See also Helen Coxall, "The Spertus Museum of Judaica, Chicago," in *Objects of Knowledge,* Susan Pearce, ed. (London: Athlone Press, 1990), 211-214; and Carlo Ginzburg, "Just One Witness," in *Probing the Limits of Representation: Nazism and the Final Solution,* Saul Friedlander, ed. (Cambridge, MA: Harvard, 1992), 82-96.
12. Geoffrey Hartman, "Public Memory and Modern Experience," *Yale Journal of Criticism* 6 (Fall 1993): 242.
13. See Lawrence L. Langer, "Memory as Time: Chronology and Duration in Holocaust Testimonies", *YYale Journal of Criticism* 6 (Fall 1993): 263. According to Langer, "[O]ne of the most striking events in Holocaust studies in recent years has been the proliferation of titles focusing on a single theme: memory. Saul Friedlander's *When Memory Comes* (1979), Pierre Vidal-Naquet's *The Assassins of Memory* (1985), Charlotte Delbo's last work, *Days and Memory* (1985), Sybil Milton's *In Fitting Memory: The Art and Politics of Holocaust Memorials* (1991), my own *Holocaust Testimonies: The Ruins of Memory* (1991), a collection of essays on Elie Wiesel called *Between Memory and Hope* (1990) . . . . James Young's study of Holocaust monuments called *The Texture of Memory* (1993), and Geoffrey Hartman's edited volume of Holocaust essays called *Shapes of Memory* (1993)."
14. Also on the subject of this historiography move, see Patrick H. Hutton, and "Review Essays" in *History and Theory* (February 1994): 95-107. According to Hutton, "[R]ising unobtrusively during the 1980s on the wings of an imposing scholarly discussion about the rhetoric of historical interpretation, the problem of memory's relationship to history has in the 1990s moved to the center of the historiographical stage. From the standpoint of the theory of history, the memory/history puzzle is conceivably today's most engaging topic." Also see, for example, Pierre Nora, "Between History and Memory," in *Les Lieux de Memoire,* trans. Marc Roudebush, *Representation* 26 (Spring 1989): 19; and *Probing the Limits of Representation: Nazism and the Final Solution.*
15. For a more developed explanation of this point see, for example, Lawrence L. Langer, *Holocaust Testimonies: The Ruins of Memory* (New Haven: Yale, 1991).
16. On these subjects, see Spielberg's "Schindler's List" and Lanzmannís "Shoah." Also see, for example, Edward Norden in "Yes and No to the Holocaust Museums," *Commentary*, (August, 1993): 23-33; Leon Wieseltier in "After Memory" *New Republic* 3 (May 1993): 16-26, and Timothy Ryback, "Evidence of Evil," 73.
17. Ryback, "Evidence of Evil," 78.
18. For a general description of the conference see Ryback, "Evidence of Evil."
19. Jonathan Webber, private communication, 25 August 1994.

20. Ryback, "Evidence of Evil," 70.
21. For the following discussion, see David Horne, *The Great Museum* (London: Pluto Press, 1984), especially pages 174-186.
22. Horne, *Great Museum,* 249.
23. Horne, *Great Museum,* 249.
24. Horne, *Great Museum,* 250.
25. Hartman, in *Holocaust Remembrance: The Shapes of Memory,* 242-243.
26. See James Young in "The Veneration of Ruins," *Yale Journal of Criticism* 6 (Fall 1993): 276.
27. Horne, *Great Museum,* 247.
28. To further problematize this issue, one might turn to an article by Michal Unger titled "The Prisoner's First Encounter With Auschwitz," *Holocaust and Genocide Studies* (1986): 279-295. Although a study of adaptation and survival in extreme circumstances, Unger demonstrates the variety of reactions inmates had upon first coming to the camps. In this sense, a representation of Auschwitz according to any centralized narrative would clearly betray the variety of experiences had by survivors, and undoubtably victims as well.
29. On the "material quality of the object," see Walter Benjamin, "The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction," *Illuminations,* ed. Hannah Arendt, trans. Harry Zohn. (London: Fontana Press, 1992), 214. According to Benjamin, "Even the most perfect reproduction of a work of art is lacking in one element: its presence in time and space, its unique existence at the place where it happens to be. This unique existence of the work of art determined the history to which it was subject throughout the time of its existence. . . . The presence of the original is the prerequisite to the concept of authenticity." From Benjamin, "The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction," in *Illuminations*, ed. Hannah Arendt, trans. Harry Zohn (London: Fontana Press, 1992), 214. With regard to comments about "material evidence," see also "The Drowned and the Saved" in *Holocaust: Religious and Philosophical Implications,* 108.
30. On selection and memory, see also Leon Wieseltier in "After Memory," 16-26. According to Wieseltier, "[R]emembering is the twin of forgetting. Memory is not retention, it is selection."
31. See Andreas Huyssen in "Monument and Memory in a Postmodern Age," in *Yale Journal of Criticism* 6 (Fall 1993): 249-261.
32. Huyssen, "Monument and Memory," 250.
33. Young, in *Writing and Rewriting the Holocaust,* as cited by Dwork and van Pelt, "Reclaiming Auschwitz," 232.
34. Although an exception to this might be found in recent debates concerning the collection and display of American Indian remains in archaeological museums. This presents an interesting question, albeit beyond the scope of this paper. That is, to what extent does the connection between a living people (particularly one of relative minority status) and the display of their respective ancestral remains shape controversies of representation and appropriation? To an extent, such debates seem to stem from attempts to save and/or resuscitate an identity in the present as is based on a connection with a history of persecution.
35. Young, "The Veneration of Ruins," 277.

36. Ryback, "Evidence of Evil," 80.
37. Ryback, "Evidence of Evil," 79.
38. Young, *The Texture of Memory,* 128.
39. Ryback, "Evidence of Evil," 79.
40. Ryback, "Evidence of Evil," 79.
41. Deborah Dwork and Robert Jan van Pelt, "Reclaiming Auschwitz," 232-251. According to Dwork and van Pelt, the Panstwowe Muzeum Oswiecim Brzezinka only offers visitors a tour of Auschwitz I. Other sites which were formerly part of the camp are not developed for tours. One may enter Birkenau (Auschwitz II), for example, but few formal markers designate its "history" as do for Auschwitz I. Auschwitz III, where an industrial plant for I.G. Farbin was constructed, is not visited, and is indeed the subject of some recent controversy as to the state of its disuse. Other peripheral camps (Rajsko, Brzeszce, Trzebinia and other places) are only minimally noted with stone markers.
42. Ryback, "Evidence of Evil," 80.
43. Young, "The Veneration of Ruins," 278.
44. Indeed, it seems unlikely that survivors too would describe their own experiences through such remnants as piles of hair, glasses, and shoes. Primo Levi, for example, explains the encounter with Auschwitz in terms of an absence of knowledge. According to Levi "Everything was as silent...We had expected something more apocalyptic: they seemed simple police agents. It was disconcerting and disarming...In less than ten minutes, all the fit men had been collected together in a group. What happened to the others, to the women, to the children, to the old men, we could establish neither then nor later: the night swallowed them up, purely and simply." Hence, a question of display is raised—is the purpose ultimately to make "witnesses" (in terms of the experiences of the victims and survivors), or to evidence criminality (in terms of the perpetrators)? Primo Levi, *Survival in Auschwitz* (New York and London: Collier Macmillan, 1961), 15.
45. See Dwork and van Pelt in "Reclaiming Auschwitz," especially 232-242.
46. Dwork and van Pelt, "Reclaiming Auschwitz," 239.
47. Dwork and van Pelt, "Reclaiming Auschwitz," 239.
48. Dwork and van Pelt, "Reclaiming Auschwitz," 238.
49. Ryback, "Evidence of Evil," 81.
50. Young, *The Texture of Memory,* 144.
51. Young, *The Texture of Memory,* 144.
52. See Young, "Jewish Memory in Poland," 219-222.
53. See Young, *Jewish Memory in Poland,* 229. See also Horne, *The Great Museum,* 238. According to Horne, "[I]n Poland, the Council for the Preservation of Monuments to Resistance and Martyrdom has produced a guide with more than 500 pages in which are listed 2,500 of the 20,000 recorded places marked by acts of Nazi brutality." On tourism and the appropriation of monuments to fascism, see especially David Horne, *The Great Museum.*

Book Reviews

Gotz Aly and Susanne Heim. *Vordenker der Vernichtung: Auschwitz und die deutschen Pläne für eine neue europäische Ordnung [Pre-thinkers of the Annihilation: Auschwitz and the German Plans for a New European Order].* (Die Zeit des Nationalismus.) Rev. ed. Frankfurt a.M.: Fischer Taschenbuch. 1993.

A book as ill-conceived as this one ordinarily does not merit much scholarly consideration. However, books about the Holocaust are different, especially when they are written by Germans and especially when they pretend to scholarship. The books by Andreas Hillgruber and Ernst Nolte which triggered the infamous German *Historikerstreit* in 1985 are good cases in point.[1] Similarly constructed arguments about a different set of events—say, the Franco-Prussian War—would hardly have been the cause of such bitter controversy, much of it spilling over into the public arena; clearly, the Holocaust remains a potent symbol and rallying cry in current German politics. Consequently, whether fair or not, German books about the Holocaust are subjected to a special kind of scrutiny. Such books are evaluated not only for their "objective" scholarly merit—their use of evidence as well as their explanatory power—but also for the political commitment they seem to champion, often implicitly. In analyzing this intriguing, if lacking, work by Götz Aly and Susanne Heim, therefore, I will pay attention not only to what is argued explicitly but also to what remains unsaid. In this short review, I not only want to address some of the empirical and analytical flaws, but also the serious conceptual problems of this text and what I consider the dubious political impulse driving the whole argument.

The main argument can be outlined in a few paragraphs. Aly and Heim argue that Nazi death-camps represented the logical culmination of a carefully planned scheme of economic rationalizing by a group of well-placed German intellectuals. These individuals were not *völkisch* racists and ideologues but academics—economists, social theorists, statisticians, and population experts armed with modern, scientific concepts—who recognized vast opportunities within

the National Socialist regime for career advancement and practical application of theoretical concepts developed across a variety of academic disciplines.

In reconstructing Auschwitz, *the* symbol for all Nazi crimes, the authors attempt to establish a central nexus between capitalism and science. According to this conceptualization, inherently negative capitalism interacted with morally neutral science to produce virile policies couched in absolutely neutral, scientific terms. This marriage between a virile ideology and an objectifying language produced a set of policies that moved inevitably, as it were, towards the destruction of European Jews, Slavs, and others. The ability of science to convert a virulent capitalist ideology into an objectifying language enabled an increasing radicalization of Nazi policies as the distance between theoretical science and applied policy diminished with the exigencies of an expanding war. Thus, the underlying pressures of capitalism, with its overemphasis on productivity, profitability and efficiency, provided the impetus and direction for National Socialism. Human populations were treated as mere factors of the economy, to be manipulated at will for the benefit of an ultimately perfectible economy.

Relying heavily on previously unpublished or underutilized documents, Aly and Heim argue that a group of scientists, employed particularly by Hermann Göring's *Vierjahresplanbehörde* but also by other important ministries, increased its own position within the Nazi decision-making process in conjunction with Germany's successful military expansion, for a time becoming *the* dominant shaper of Nazi policies. As long as Germany was confident in its unilateral ability to militarily and politically control all of the European continent, scientists could develop grand and visionary schemes for the restructuring of European economic and social structures, certain that these conceptual ideas would be transformed into reality by German hegemony over Europe. After the German annexation of Austria on March 13, 1938, a practical experiment with far-reaching consequences—termed *Modell Wien* by the authors—was undertaken at the behest of Hermann Göring. It initiated the process of eliminating Jews in systematic fashion first from the Austrian, and then after the November *Reichskristallnacht,* the German economy. Later this process was exported in slightly altered and increasingly radicalized form to occupied Holland, the annexed General gouvernement, and other Eastern and Southeastern European provinces controlled by Germany. *Modell Wien* aimed at a variety of goals simultaneously: in the short term to help prepare Germany economically for the impending war, and in the long term to help establish new social and economic structures along more rational and productive lines throughout Europe. Finally, according to the authors, *Modell Wien* provided the conceptual framework for

the systematic elimination of Jews altogether at Auschwitz and elsewhere. With Germany's stalled offensive at the Eastern Front in the winter of 1941-1942, however, this conglomerate of intellectuals lost much of its direct influence, except insofar as the concepts it developed continued to be applied.

Thus the "Final Solution of the Jewish Problem" was but a subset of these scientists' larger goal of reordering *all* of European society according to some artificially conceived "population optimum" and "maximum efficiency." The authors maintain that the German war plans against the Soviet Union—which included strategies of systematic starvation of millions of Soviet civilians (the Germans planned on twenty to thirty million such deaths, and even calculated the savings this would bring in terms of "unwasted" ammunition!)—were fundamentally similar to the systematic murder of millions of European Jews in extermination camps. The Nazi's Jewish policies were only the first of many attempts at manipulating the composition of Europe's population. The annihilation of the Jews only *appears* to have occupied a special place in Nazi policy because it had been achieved most completely by the conclusion of the war. In reality, the idea of restructuring the population of Europe had already been applied by 1939 in the *Aktion* T_4 against handicapped and mentally ill patients, and it also dominated the plans for the invasion of the Soviet Union. The elimination of European Jews was undertaken earlier than other similar projects because of the relative ease of carrying out such a policy in a racially charged social environment in which the politically weak Jewish population, already a convenient scapegoat for all kinds of social evils, was highly vulnerable.

Jews, then, were annihilated as part of the imperative of eliminating those sectors of the community deemed *economically* unproductive. The systematic murder of millions of Jews was thus not due to racial hatred, but to an attempt to artificially create an economically efficient population structure. "Population" had become the most fungible *economic* factor guiding Nazi policies. The Holocaust that victimized millions of innocent Europeans was therefore but the logical culmination of a modern capitalist system unrestrained by external, moral forces. The Nazi-state and its political/racial ideology at best facilitated, but did not cause, this Holocaust by introducing a new moral regime. Racial argumentation used to define the legal and civic status of Jews served only to legitimize the bigger goals of economic rationalization. The cruel logic of modern capitalism, rather than the irrational hate of bigotry, determined that "excess" populations had to be eliminated altogether.

Aly's and Heim's argument, though repeated throughout the thick volume with the conviction of believers, is weak on a number of counts and fails to convince. Their study falls prey to a problematic conceptualization from the

very start: it sets up a stark but false dichotomy between fanatical, racist Nazi ideologues on the one hand, and objective, neutral scientists on the other. According to the authors, these scientists acted only on the basis of the results of disinterested scholarly investigations and certainly had no interest in a specific political ideology. Thus, Aly and Heim gloss over the fact that many of these "abstract" thinkers actually served in significant political positions, including commanders of ghettos and governors of provinces. This argument does not hold for a variety of other reasons. First, the theoretical model of science as a neutral entity, independent of socio-political context and ideology is questionable—and not only in this particular instance. Second, it should have been obvious to the authors that these specialists constituted a highly (self-)selective group: none of its members would have been able to achieve any position of importance within the tightly controlled Nazi-state *unless* they practiced a certain kind of science, predicated first and foremost on the officially accepted race-ideology. The very fact that these scientists achieved important positions indicates their amenability to party doctrine; scientists who expressed even the slightest reservations—not to speak of Jewish, gay, or communist scientists—were quickly purged. It is impossible and misleading to divorce these scientists from their environment. Third, science is not monolithic; it usually offers more than one way to solve a particular problem. However, Aly and Heim naively suggest a seemingly magical unity of these scientists across a variety of *competing* academic disciplines without contemplating the possibility that dissent, considered a political offense, was supressed. Even so, some plans surely had to have been offered which were then rejected; that is, the *political* elite had to finally select one policy from among many. Indeed, the authors discuss competing plans for the Lodz-ghetto economy but then fail to explain how such a diversity of opinion was possible in such a remarkably united group. The notion of an independent cadre of scientists capable of introducing a completely new approach to the "Jewish problem" is thus problematic. Such a notion of scientific independence is particularly puzzling in light of the role of the sciences, especially physical anthropology, in legitimating racist ideologies.

Another problem stems from the authors' reliance on materials almost exclusively Nazi and technocratic in nature. Aly and Heim repeat the language used by these specialists without qualification, failing to properly evaluate the interesting material they have uncovered. They simply take for granted the scientists' language reducing the worth of human beings to their "productivity" or "unproductivity," even though Aly and Heim themselves note the prevalent use of euphemisms among the various levels of the Nazi bureaucracy. The authors here fail to consider the social context of linguistic valuation, in which race,

ideology, power politics, and science coexist, variously in competition and cooperation with each others' authority. This interrelationship has to be acknowledged. Just because scientists and academics employed a peculiar, seemingly innocent jargon should not veil of what they actually spoke. A "translated," neutral terminology may extend the meaning of the original concept, enabling a more systematic approach of classifying, defining, and handling these concepts. Nevertheless, the original referent—racial ideology, in this particular case—remains firmly entrenched. In the Nazi state, the economic reconfiguration of society along "productive" and "unproductive" lines was inconceivable without the racial underpinnings of "superior" and "inferior" groups.

Aly and Heim thus fail to grasp the integral connection between passage of anti-Jewish legislation to help purify the Aryan race and policies justified according to economic productivity standards alone. Each policy re-enforces the racial notion of natural inferiority. If economic benefits do accrue for the non-Jewish population from specific policies, this does not challenge the fundamental purpose, the *racial* imperative, of eliminating the Jewish presence altogether. A race-based policy which also brings unambiguous short-term economic benefits to the non-Jewish population only *confirms* the race ideology on which it is based. Racial chauvinism includes within it the notion that the inferior group is inferior in every way, including economically. Stating the economic "unproductivity" of the Jews really refers to their racial inferiority. This is manifest particularly in light of the development of the Jews' status of "unproductivity" in German-occupied Europe. This status, and the poverty that came with it, was forcibly assigned through racial policies which deprived Jews of economic opportunities, and was not somehow a native character trait of the Jews. The economic terminology only made sense *after* the Jews had been artificially recreated along those lines.

The authors' failure to recognize the fundamental relationship between racial and economic motivations is clearly related to a teleology in the study apparent not only in the content but also in the language and style of the work. The authors read history backwards: they assume a continuity among a variety of capitalist/fascist/imperialist/colonialist regimes, one of which is the National Socialist, another of which is the Federal Republic. That this belief guides the authors' argument is borne out by the attempt to link these two German regimes through a series of highly suggestive "perpetrator-biographies" separated from the main text by boxed inserts. The emphasis on structural equivalencies between a variety of regimes lies at the base of the authors' decision to concentrate on a "planning intelligentsia" aware to a high degree of ultimate imperial-

ist ambitions. Politicians, acutely unaware of their own goals of bringing about a modern society, are apparently peripheral to the Nazi phenomenon and not worthy of study.

This teleology blinds the authors to readings of their evidence which contradict the kind of Marxist model of history to which they subscribe. This manifests itself in the interpretation of details. The authors reduce all phenomena associated with the Nazi state to economic imperatives though other motivations indubitably played a role in the (successful) implementation of policies: power politics, terror and fear, psychological or sociological reasons, religion. Documents are simply not as unambiguous as the authors claim. Racial ideology is frequently mixed with scientific language. To maintain their argument, Aly and Heim need to make special efforts to highlight those few documents which are purely technical in nature and contain no reference at all to antisemitism or race. This amounts to negative evidence which, without more explicit proof, is simply not convincing.

Aly and Heim claim that many orders were purposely given orally or destroyed. However, this seems to contradict the basic premise of their work: that Nazis could murder without a guilty conscience because of the objectifying language of science which converted the "murder of human beings" into the "rationalizing of economic factors." If Nazi policies were so entangled within a scientific discourse, how did they recognize that this was *not* normative and had to be hidden? Rather, these scientists, many of whom were socialized during pre-Nazi Weimar years, fully recognized that they served a new ideology that their neutralizing language and euphemisms could *not* adequately hide, even to themselves, and that they were perpetrating morally charged acts in developing plans that called for the elimination of millions of people. This same characterization seems applicable to Aly and Heim themselves: though they use the historical apparatus, they seem to serve a particular political agenda, namely, to illustrate an "objectively" perceivable historical continuity between the fascist states of the Nazis and the Federal Republic. Finally, whether the authors intend this or not, by furnishing such a structural and "rational" explanation for the Holocaust they are doing much more than presenting an innocent new interpretation. Indeed, by historicizing murder within a certain essence of modernization, they seem to remove any particularity and thus any kind of individual culpability from the Holocaust. Both the human victims and the human perpetrators are conveniently forgotten as mere byproducts of larger forces.

Aly's and Heim's argument furthermore fails to provide any non-circumstantial evidence that directly links the scientists' plans with the actual decisions made at the political level, regarding either the military strategy in the

East or the decisions to implement *Aktion* T_4 and the "Final Solution of the Jewish Question." Thus, whether these academics' theories were really transformed into reality remains unclear. It is just as likely that these scientists developed their conceptual models after the policies had already been implemented on the political level, or at least suggested as viable *political* options as a kind of public legitimation of the regime's policies. In fact, Aly and Heim ignore the political decision-making process entirely even though final decisions were certainly decreed by a *political* and not a technocratic elite. In their hurry to establish a new paradigm for the study of the Holocaust, Aly and Heim simply do not integrate the new information they have unearthed about this class of scientists with other central factors. None of the documents provide convincing evidence that economics was ever more than a tool of legitimization for policies implemented by the political elite, albeit with the expert advice of consultants and specialists. It remains unsubstantiated that these scientists had real influence on the decisions of the political elite, and, if indeed there was some influence, whether theoretical considerations routinely overrode ideological motivations.

Scholars have frequently noted that there was considerable infighting among the Nazi political elite; Aly and Heim do not pay this much heed. They feel justified in isolating Göring as the central organizing, though not political (he was second in-command of the Third Reich) figure for implementing policies along rational economic lines after the unruly mobs of the *Reichskristallnacht* of 9 November 1938 destroyed large amounts of property and wealth subject to state confiscation. Aly and Heim are correct in pointing out that at this juncture Göring declared the Jewish problem as "a comprehensively economic problem" and asked his staff at the *Vierjahresplanbehörde*, experts and academics in various fields, to coordinate policies to achieve Jewish exclusion from the German economy as part of their function to prepare Germany economically for the impending war. However, they downplay the role of other ministries and Hitler himself in this decision, and treat this "economic" classification as the only viable option put forward at this time. In fact, Jews were targeted in a variety of ways simultaneously, with racial laws in particular being continuously sharpened. Aly and Heim are certainly justified in suggesting that the Nazis tried to gain economic advantages for the Reich at the expense of the Jews. However, it was the supposed racial inferiority of the Jews that made such economic exploitation feasible in the first place, not the economic reasoning that justified racial discrimination. When Aly and Heim argue that the Jews were economically "unproductive" they are simply repeating Nazi racial slogans. Economic inferiority of the Jews was enforced by the Nazis to substantiate their more fundamental racial claims.

Aly's and Heim's attempt to tie together a number of seemingly discordant elements into a single explanatory framework is interesting, but it is executed with a striking naiveté. They begin with the solid insight that the confluence of the German expectation of complete victory in 1941 and the official decision to proceed with mass murder in the same year was not accidental. From this, however, they jump to the dubious conclusion that the *Aktion T_4*, and the planned starvation of Soviets, as well as the Jewish exterminations, are not differentiable. They want to subsume each of these events into a coherent, rational framework (as if mass murder can ever be truly "coherent") even though one action is specifically combined with war aims (Soviets), while another targets one's own civilians not directly affected by war (*Aktion T_4*), and the third requires that massive energies be expended to organize the transportation from throughout Europe to specifically designated places for no other reason than murder (Jews).

The authors' insight that the elimination of the Jews from the Austrian economy shared certain conceptual and structural similarities with the physical elimination of the Jews in the crematoria of Auschwitz is suggestive but not fully thought out. Despite certain structural similarities that might be detected, specific connections still need to be shown and particular dissimilarities noted. Thus it required a specific decision to systematically kill Jews, even after many Jews had already died during the rounding-up processes and through the planned malnutrition in the ghettoes. There exists a qualitative difference conceptually—regardless of the language in which it is couched, explained, or justified—between, to use Aly's and Heim's language, an economic measure which hopes to *reduce* costs by shortening rations and a measure which will *eliminate* this economic factor entirely through murder. Even the politicians at the Wannsee Conference knew that they had come upon a solution which was fundamentally new in its unambiguous finality: they proudly called it the *Final* Solution.

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Notes

1. For a cogent analysis of the German historians' debate, see Peter Baldwin, ed., *Reworking the Past: Hitler, the Holocaust, and the Historians' Debate* (Boston, 1990), esp. the editor's introduction.

Chris Friday. *Organizing Asian American Labor: The Pacific Coast Canned-Salmon Industry, 1870-1942.* Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1994.

Benson Tong. *Unsubmissive Women: Chinese Prostitutes in Nineteenth-Century San Francisco.* Norman, Okla.: University of Oklahoma Press, 1994.

Judy Yung. *Unbound Feet: A Social History of Chinese Women in San Francisco.* Berkeley: University of California Press, 1995.

On a round globe, where does the "Occident" end and the "Orient" begin? Edward Said limited his famous discussion of "Orientalism" to the Middle East, reducing some of the confusion of boundaries, but the U.S. West has been a troubled zone of cultural interaction for centuries. In Said's Foucauldian formulation, the establishment of a systematic "Orientalist" discipline of study was a crucial adjunct to imperialism, a process of observation (surveillance) and categorization that helped separate, essentialize, and control the colonial subject (the Other). As characterized by Western scholars in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, the Orient was static, politically corrupt, and generally feminized as exotic in order to justify its subjugation by the virile rationalism of the West—the corollary myth of the Occident.

Of course, Asians traveled East to come to America, and the West they encountered was far different from the one described by Frederick Jackson Turner in his famous frontier thesis. Turner's account of the "closing" of the frontier discounted the indigenous presence to describe the area as vast, free, and empty until it finally began to fill up with white people by the 1890s. Isolation and severe environments tested true men and exceptional women, but initially promised generous rewards to European American pioneers. Ideally, the western region was the last place where the popular ideal of an agrarian and small producer republic could be realized. In fact, however, slavery in the South and industrial wage labor in the North had already compromised this elusive vision, and civil war determined that the latter would supply the cheap labor needed by the capital-dependent extractive industries of the region. The resultant class tensions repeatedly exploded into violent confrontations in mining, lumber, railroad, and cannery camps as well as the towns, and cities of the western United States. As Alexander Saxton, David Roediger, and others have shown, angry, disillusioned European Americans quickly adapted the language of slavery and race to identify and assert their rights as free white workers at the expense of the Chinese and other racial-ethnic groups.

Blaming immigrants for California's economic problems is nothing new. When their labor was essential, a labor caste system developed, but competition aggravated ethnic prejudice. The result was violent, systematic discrimination against

the Chinese culminating in the Chinese Exclusion Act of 1882. The young European American men coming West sought economic opportunities, and so did their Asian counterparts. A persistent twentieth-century notion is that the former were "settlers" and the latter "sojourners" who came only to get rich before returning to homes and families in China. This distinction needs serious reevaluation. Anglos were often extremely transient while many of the Chinese hoped to remain in the United States. The completion of the transcontinental railroad in 1869 and depression in the 1870s brought many Chinese workers into urban industrial jobs concentrated in shoe, textile, cigar, and clothing manufacture. Competitive material conditions justified but also helped create divisive racial stereotypes.

Under the circumstances, it is remarkable that the Asian American migrants managed to establish permanent communities. Regrettably, their stories are still largely marginalized within mainstream United States history, although the books reviewed in this essay help remedy that situation. In the U.S. West, Asians were considered particularly alien, inscrutable, fundamentally undesirable, and thus unassimilable. Only a few critics pointed out the hypocrisy of expecting a group of new migrants to acculturate in a hostile society. Significantly, racist complaints often used the language of sex and gender, the powerful key to Orientalist ideology. Most of the alleged transgressions of the "Orientals" were either sexual or moral: "white slavery," disease, miscegenation, and loss of racial vigor all served as justifications for social control measures. European Americans saw Asian men as coveting white women, those icons of racial purity, and Chinese women as invidiously submissive and seductive. Even now, parallel to the persistent idea that all Chinese men were sojourners is that all Chinese women were prostitutes. As Benson Tong's study shows, by 1880 only 17.5 percent of San Francisco's Chinese women were prostitutes, while over half of the Chinese women in the city lived and probably worked with men in family arrangements.

In *Organizing Asian American Labor*, Chris Friday has analyzed the situation of Asian workers in the fish canning industry, where widespread but very isolated groups developed distinct production practices, community strategies, and patterns of resistance at a time when they had few legal rights. Friday places his study in a world systems framework to analyze the labor market structure in the U.S. West during its "capitalist transformation," but he says little about the conditions that catalyzed emigration from China. (p. 5) Friday describes the contract labor system, which was usually run by ethnic entrepreneurs who assembled the work force and negotiated contracts covering both living and working conditions. Thankfully, he avoids Eurocentrism by concentrating on relations among various groups of male Asian workers, but the picture remains partial because it does not integrate the fishing component of the industry, where Anglo men predominated. It also

excludes Canada, where the labor force was an extremely heterogeneous group of Native, European, and Asian, primarily Japanese, women cannery workers and male fishers, with similar circumstances in Alaska. Of course, no single study can cover everything, but including British Columbia only when it is convenient is problematic. Obviously, the Pacific Northwest fish industry needs a synthetic comparative or bioregional treatment, but Friday has produced strong sectoral analysis integrating social history with more traditional shop (cannery) floor concerns.

Faced with a labor shortage in the early years of abundant fish harvests, employers relied upon predominantly Chinese contractors to hire and supervise successive migrations of male Asian workers for seasonal, labor-intensive employment. Far from objecting, skilled white workers (fishers, mechanics, supervisors) at least tacitly accepted the need for a Chinese work force to do the hard and unpleasant work of canning. The Chinese sorted themselves into a labor hierarchy based on skill and used various strategies, including direct action, to improve their circumstances. Legal exclusion briefly boosted their bargaining position, but eventually employers had to find new labor sources for their booming industry. These included more recent groups of Asian migrants in addition to European American women and children who were usually the relatives of fishermen. Friday indicates that Alaskan employers turned to Native women, but they had always been a primary source of cannery labor in the northern areas. As an extension of aboriginal hunting and gathering strategies, Native men caught and Native women processed the fish, but the fact that Indians worked according to their own schedules and needs exasperated employers in need of dependable labor. By the mid-1890s, they began to hire Japanese men, but Chinese labor contractors still controlled much of the access to cannery work and favored their compatriots, creating ethnic tensions between the two groups. Japanese agents made some inroads into the contracting system, but when the Filipinos joined the migratory circuit in the 1910s and 1920s, they found it very difficult to create a similar niche and turned to unionization as an alternative.

In the nineteenth century, Chinese cannery workers lived in three different types of communities: the bunkhouse village, the cannery town, and the small-town cannery. In the isolated camps of the former, the Chinese extended their work relations into bachelor communities and social networks. Food sharing, as well as various other amusements and vices, helped alleviate the loneliness of aging men separated from their families. When the Japanese moved in, cultural clashes often led to the provision of separate quarters and kitchens. In cannery towns such as Astoria, Oregon, a small Chinese American community offered limited possibilities for female companionship, entrepreneurial opportunity within the ethnic economy, and social, political, and religious organization. Friday suggests that life

in the more economically diversified small towns was hardest on Chinese laborers who were segregated at the cannery but still close enough to be targets for violence and discrimination. Initially free from exclusionary restrictions, the Japanese could and often did bring their wives in order to establish communities such as Stevenson, B.C., where many of the men fished while the women worked in the canneries. The Filipinos shared with the Japanese hopes for education and upward mobility, but economic conditions during the Depression thwarted these plans. The Filipinos also lacked the family and community networks and strong nationalist unity characteristic of the Japanese.

The political center of Friday's book is the description of interethnic cooperation and industrial organization in the cannery industry in the late 1930s, an achievement that was no less remarkable for being so brief. Uncontrollable circumstances, including World War Two, Japanese internment, and trends in the industry toward mechanization and consolidation, soon destroyed a fragile unity. In his examination of the organizational efforts of Filipinos, Japanese, and radical European Americans, Friday deals lightly with the controversial issue of communism. One could argue, however, that the Communist Party's early commitment to racial equality was one of the few positive aspects of its program. Communists, including those working within the Congress of Industrial Organizations (CIO), made laudable efforts to organize low-wage, racial-ethnic laborers, and this record stands in clear contrast to that of the American Federation of Labor (AFL).

Aided by passage of the National Recovery Act, Seattle Filipinos who wanted to break up the contract labor system formed the Cannery Workers and United Farm Laborers Union (CWFLU) in 1933. By assuming the social welfare responsibilities of the contractors, as well as the hiring process, the union gained status, but also proved vulnerable to charges of graft and corruption. In December 1936, two union officials were murdered. In San Francisco, the contracting system was stronger but subject to sensational investigations and prosecutions which helped organizers establish the Alaska Cannery Workers Union (ACWU) in 1935-1936. In the late 1930s, they had to work overtime to sustain solidarity threatened by the 1937 Japanese invasion of China, the divisions within the Chinese community between supporters of the Chinese communists and the Kuomintang, and the bitter factional fights of the AFL and the CIO. In 1937, the ACWU decided to affiliate with the United Cannery, Agricultural, Packing, and Allied Workers of America (UCAPAWA-CIO). The AFL retaliated with a dual unionism strategy, but ACWU won an National Labor Relations Board (NLRB) certification election in 1938. The AFL tried to undermine Seattle's CWFLU even before it decided to affiliate with the CIO and made considerable gains by playing to Japanese nationalism, but lost the union election in 1938.

For the next few years, the CIO organizations tried to maintain a delicate balance between ethnic representation and union control. Perhaps trying to avoid the more militant ACWU in San Francisco, cannery owners shifted their center of operations to Seattle in 1941; in 1943, the two unions amalgamated. Growing polarization over the Japanese issue culminated in the union's failure to protest internment and its support for Filipino confiscation of Japanese land. Changing postwar conditions, especially the precipitous decline in fish stocks, decimated the industry. The union was also the target of vicious red-baiting in the late 1940s, and Friday's epilogue is not clear on the organization's fate. Sources such as Vicki Ruiz's work indicate that the UCAPAWA expired in 1950, a casualty of the CIO's anti-communist purges. It is a sad ending, compared to the brief triumphs of the 1936-1942 period.

Another major postwar development was sustained female employment. Some cannery labor had always been female, although Friday does not really address the experiences of women workers. He makes a good effort to develop a gendered analysis of male worker communities, but women themselves are shadowy figures in his narrative except when they become indispensable for community studies. Friday notes that Filipinos in Alaska socialized and intermarried with European American women—a rather remarkable situation considering strong social and legal prohibitions. Japanese, and to a lesser degree, Chinese men sometimes formed attachments to Native women, but these were often temporary or commercial in nature. Happily, Friday's discussion of early Chinese communities avoids the common misperception that all the women were prostitutes. This pernicious image is further challenged by the work of Benson Tong and Judy Yung.

In *Unsubmissive Women*, Tong has produced a useful descriptive study of Chinese prostitution synthesized from a variety of English-language sources. He explicitly acknowledges his debt to the work of Lucie Cheng Hirata, but does not pursue her more provocative insights. In her article, "Free, Indentured, Enslaved: Chinese Prostitutes in Nineteenth-Century America" (*Signs* 5 [1979], 3-29), Hirata stressed the high labor value of prostitution which earned local Chinese investors enormous profits at a time when they were restricted from many other economic opportunities. Of course, corrupt European American officials, landlords, lawyers, and auxiliary vice merchants also profited handsomely. Hirata also suggested that prostitution helped sustain the semifeudal patriarchal system of the Chinese homeland by keeping overseas workers happy but unattached in the United States, thus encouraging their continuing emotional and economic commitment to China.

Tong's narrative discusses the serious problems in China that forced women to sign disadvantageous indentured labor contracts and families to sell their daughters, and the stratagems used to trick or even kidnap women and to circumvent

legal restrictions. New arrivals were whisked off to Chinatown where they became either relatively privileged concubines, higher priced prostitutes catering to an exclusively Chinese clientele, or women of the crib trade. Some tried to escape by suicide, running away, or legal means, but the Chinese organizations (tongs) in control of the vice trade paid good money for official cooperation, and were also quick to use the U.S. legal system to recover their property. Apparently the respectable Chinese community ignored the whole business except when it generated negative publicity and violence, but as Peggy Pascoe's work has demonstrated, the Chinese women did find support among European American women missionaries.

Tong's effort to humanize these early Chinese American migrants by countering stereotyped fantasies about "Oriental" women and giving them some dignity and control over their lives is a noble one. Some structures of oppression are so overwhelming, however, that it becomes difficult to rescue the trapped unfortunates. Thus Tong's characterization of these women as "unsubmissive" is problematic, since unquestionably many of them suffered and died miserably from disease, overwork, or neglect. As he repeatedly observes, "the vast majority failed . . . to break free." (pp. 55, 77) Most of these women were essentially slaves, and while slaves do have options for resistance, these are usually limited and potentially dangerous. How can we know whether basic individual survival is an act of resistance or acquiescence? In his chapter on "Violence and Public Women," Tong leans too far toward self-determination. He argues that "cases of violence against Chinese public women were few and far between" based on the infrequency of incidents in newspaper reports, presumably of police court proceedings, during a brief period between 1872 and 1873. (p. 139) While he reasonably criticizes lurid and misleading journalistic (and historic) accounts, Tong needs to address the probability of underreporting and expand his limited sample size, preferably by going directly to the official public records if they are available. Obviously owners, pimps, complicit public officials, and clients preferred to avoid confrontations, but that seems insufficient support for his claim that "Women controlled what took place in their cribs and in their beds." (p. 145) Isolation in Chinatown might have protected them from hostile European Americans, but it also increased the chances that abuses committed by fellow Chinese would go unobserved or unpunished.

Using census sources, Tong expands Hirata's preliminary demographic analysis. Between 1860 and 1870, the absolute number of Chinese women in San Francisco increased from less than 700 to almost 3,000, but the proportion engaged in prostitution was already declining (from 85 to 62.6 percent). Tong explores the possibility of outmigration to other areas of the West, but it remains unclear how many women actually left the profession by marriage. Because there were so few

Chinese women, and because prostitutes earned some respect as dutiful daughters (at least within working-class Chinese society), Hirata suggested that many married laborers. Tong disputes this idea because redeeming a prostitute was very expensive, and flight was very dangerous (although both did occur), so he reasons that only the wealthier Chinese could afford to buy wives. The employment data indicates that in 1880, 66.9 percent of Chinese women did not work, compared to 32.2 percent in 1870. During this decade, many legitimate Chinese wives arrived to join their husbands, which is the story Judy Yung tells, but many others were certainly former prostitutes. In spite of miscegenation laws, a handful married European American men, but for the most part, members of both groups thought it was degrading to have sexual relations with the other. By 1880, 52.5 percent of Chinese women lived with men in family arrangements, and often with a man employed in the same line of work, suggesting a growing female presence in both family businesses and the low-wage industrial and service sectors.

Tong is unclear as to whether such a career history carried a stigma within the Chinese community. As prostitutes, women were shunned and marginalized because "Chinese society considered prostitutes 'polluted' and 'unclean'—in the physical, moral, and spiritual senses—because they engaged in frequent sexual intercourse." (pp. 115, 122) Elsewhere he seems to imply that prostitution was understood as a necessity. There is clearly a class distinction here, and one wonders how the more elite Chinese reacted as ex-prostitutes became founding members of the community. Tong does not discuss whether this sensitive issue was a source of community tension because his story essentially ends with exclusion. In *Unbound Feet,* Judy Yung can also slip past this tricky question because her wonderful book concentrates on the twentieth-century experiences of Chinese American women in San Francisco. She discusses the early period briefly, but her study really begins in 1902, "the first time that the issue of women's emancipation was publicly aired in San Francisco Chinatown," and ends with World War Two as a turning point in terms of improved civic and economic opportunity. (p. 8) Yung examines the role of women within the community, class and generational differences, dual national loyalism, and especially political and feminist activism. The footbinding metaphor illustrates a process of progressive liberation closely connected to revolutionary democratization, nationalism, and feminism in China. Young cautions that "Unlike in the West, in China the argument for improving women's lot was always put in terms of how it would benefit the Chinese race and nation, rather than how it would benefit women as individuals." (p. 54) This admonition reminds us of the need to carefully historicize and regionalize gender processes rather than to essentialize European American feminism as an unquestioned standard.

Yung's story begins literally with an introduction to her own family. Reminding

us how easily history can be lost, Yung reveals that until she began her research, she did not realize that she was actually a fourth-generation Chinese American. Yung discovered that in 1893 her maternal great-grandmother, Leong Shee Chin, arrived in San Francisco to join her husband of five years, Chin Lung, who had emigrated to the United States just before the 1882 Exclusion Act. The wife of a laborer could not enter the country under the new law, but merchants and their wives were exempt, so Chin Lung invested in a store and then sent for Leong Shee. While Yung's great-grandfather prospered as an agriculturalist in the Sacramento Valley, her great-grandmother, who had bound feet, preferred to live and raise her children in the protected enclave of San Francisco's Chinatown. Leong Shee was not satisfied and returned to China in 1904, but she was a changed woman, especially after the 1911 Revolution. Yung relates how "she unbound her feet, converted to Christianity, and became educated and active in the local Church of Christ." In addition, "she invested her husband's money wisely in property and business ventures, had a two-story house with indoor plumbing built for herself in Macao, purchased four *mui tsai* [slave girls] to serve her and her family, and lived to the ripe age of ninety-four." (p. 50) Thus Great-Grandmother Leong Shee becomes emblematic of the processes of both traditionalism and change that Yung discerns in the lives of many Chinese American women.

This personalized account immediately tells a very different story, one of individuals and families trying to establish new lives in the United States in spite of tremendous obstacles. Now the experiences of "sojourners" and prostitutes can fit into complicated migratory patterns, community-building processes, and life cycles. By 1900, the wives of elite merchants remained secluded, but most Chinese American women worked as part of a family support strategy. Yung clearly shows what Tong could only suggest: that because of their scarcity, economic contributions, role in transmitting Chinese culture, and the absence of in-laws, women began to enjoy greater respect and freedom of movement than they had in traditional Chinese society.

The Chinese women who migrated to the United States in the early 1900s experienced revolutionary change at home and suffered indignities and discrimination in their new land, but slowly communities grew. The inhabitants of San Francisco's Chinatown established schools, churches, hospitals, publications, and social and civic organizations to provide the services largely denied them by the outside society. Reformers cleaned up the vice trade but retained just enough exotic imagery to convert it into a profitable tourist attraction. More women with children meant that fewer earned wages; instead, they worked in family businesses, took in boarders, or did sewing at home. Others entered garment factories, where Chinese women predominated after World War I, or performed public service.

The 1911 victory of China's progressives had important ideological implications for the new generation of American-born daughters. Chinese parents insisted on their education, in spite of segregationist policies, and many young women eventually earned advanced degrees. Unfortunately, persistent discrimination blocked career opportunities outside Chinatown. The majority remained to become important role models and community leaders; others returned to China to assist with modernization projects in that country. Organizations such as churches and the YMCA negotiated the Americanization process, but other new behaviors, especially attitudes toward personal relationships and marriage, aggravated the generation gap. If it seems surprising that the Chinese American process of transculturation was similar to that of other groups, this only demonstrates the power of residual stereotypes.

It was not until World War Two that the demand for labor combined with growing sympathy for Chinese allies to help open the dominant society to Chinese Americans. Ironically, systematic discrimination seems to have protected Chinatown against the worst ravages of the Depression because the community was already accustomed to self-sufficiency, subsequently supplemented by federal relief and jobs. After so many years of virulent antagonism, workers were cautious about joining the mainstream labor movement, but they formed a Chinese local of the International Ladies Garment Workers Union (ILGWU), and managed the large 1938 National Dollar Strike. In Chinatown, World War Two started with the Mukden Incident in September 1931. The community immediately rallied to raise money, boycott Japanese goods, and initiate a propaganda and information campaign to publicize China's situation at a time when America was still deeply isolationist. When the United States entered the war, Yung states that "Social attitudes toward Chinese Americans changed overnight. Once considered immoral, unclean, and a threat to the American way of life, they were now depicted as good, honest, hardworking Americans." (p. 250) Chinese Americans joined the Armed Services in integrated units, finally got jobs outside of Chinatown, and benefitted from favorable changes in immigration policy. Discrimination did not disappear, but the changes represented a real watershed and the final integration of Chinese Americans in the land where many had lived for decades.

No study is perfect, of course. Due to the availability of sources, Yung depends largely on material relating to middle- and upper-class women, but she recognizes this bias. The celebratory tone of multiple individual success stories is indeed inspirational, but how representative is it? There are some loud silences, such as the question of Chinatown's response to Japanese Americans during World War Two, particularly internment. On the whole, however, Yung presents a breathtakingly rich array of material, including the records of Chinese women's organizations,

Chinese-language publications, and extensive personal histories, and she promises to publish a fuller documentary collection in the future. Her years of dedication as a community-based librarian and historian are clearly evident, although she is by no means unique. The upheavals of the 1960s forced the historical profession to recognize important issues raised by community scholars, but not necessarily their contributions, and proper recognition is long overdue. Certainly collaborative research can offer promising ways to deal with complicated language and cross-cultural issues.

The works reviewed in this essay all help illuminate the pathos and beauty of lives marginalized by hatred and ignorance. In her 1975 autobiography, *No Chinese Stranger* (quoted by Yung on p. 177), Jade Snow Wong wrote hopefully that

> With strong belief in our purpose, it may not be folly for the determined, with the hearts of children, to attack the high mountain of prejudice in our own way. When we die, our children and grandchildren will keep on working until, some day, the mountain will diminish. Then there will be no Chinese stranger.

Scholars once helped construct the stereotypes that separated the "Orient" from the "Occident," so now they have an obligation to try to correct those images and flatten that mountain. The result will be a more inclusive understanding of over a century of interaction among these Eastwestern neighbors.

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Kären Wigen. *The Making of a Japanese Periphery, 1750-1920.* University of California Press, 1995.

The influence of geography, especially cultural geography, can be seen in theoretical approaches used in many recent works within the discipline of history. But geographical methodology, often viewed as technically cartographic by non-geographers, has been largely overlooked as a way to do history. Kären Wigen, a geographer who teaches in the department of history at Duke University, reminds historians and geographers alike that historical processes have spatial dimensions, and that environments and regions are subject to construction and reconstruction on the basis of changing social, political, and economic factors. Wigen examines one region of Japan and its transformation from a semiautarkic agricultural area, marked by a variety of thriving proto-industries, into an economically dependent periphery within the new configuration of Japan as nation-state and empire. The unit of the "functional (or nodal) region" used in her study consists of "a contiguous area united by a complementarity of economic and political resources, and integrated through the routine interactions among its constituent parts." (p. 16) She argues convincingly that such a regional study incorporating both synchronic and diachronic analyses can significantly modify historical assumptions made upon the basis of more generalized or national studies. Where past scholarship has generalized the nature of economic and political development over time for the whole country, Wigen explores the contingent relationships among regions and their different patterns of development to offer a more complex vision of trends that, taken as a whole, constitute the formation of Japan as a modern nation.

Wigen's study focuses on the area of central Japan called Shimoina, the southern portion of what during the Tokugawa Period (1600-1868) was known as Shinano Province, or present-day Nagano Prefecture. Her central argument is that between 1750 and 1920, Shimoina underwent a series of political, technological, and social revolutions that led to an "inversion" of the economic and social landscape of the area. Where Shimoina had once been a fairly autonomous, self-sufficient economic region, by the turn of the twentieth century it had become a periphery within the new configuration of power whose center lay in Tokyo. Key to this transformation was the development of a local economy based on silk production, where previously a more diversified system combining the small-scale production of luxury goods and an efficient transport network had prevailed. Shimoina's location south of one of Japan's two major highways, the Nakasendō, shaped the process of its proto-industrialization, defined

by Wigen as "the widespread development of rural outwork to produce commodities for distant markets." (p. 8) The Ina Road which wended through southern Shinano province connected the Tōkaidō and the Nakasendō—the two major highways leading to the capital—and constituted a major packhorse route that did not suffer the same regulation, monitoring, and taxation as the national turnpikes. Wigen emphasizes that political and legal maneuvering were central to the construction of the Ina Road as a major route for the transport and distribution of goods. The laquerware, textile and paper "proto-industries" that developed in Shimoina grew out of a complex variety of environmental, demographic, and economic factors, all facilitated by this accessible and affordable transport system that connected the region to the growing markets beyond its boundaries.

The economic and political events attending the Meiji Restoration of 1868 changed this delicate balance and "peripheralized" what had once been a fairly autonomous economic zone unhampered by heavy-handed directives from the state. Wigen defines "peripheralization" as "incorporat[ion] into larger political and economic circuits in ways that undermined both local autonomy and local accumulation" (p. 13), and suggests that Shimoina was but one region in which this process was taking place. With its "forced entry into the global economy" in the mid-1850s, Japan became part of the worldwide development of capitalism. The opening of Japanese ports to foreign trade and the drastic political reconfigurations that ensued led to the rapid industrialization of the local economy. Shimoina's transformation centered on silk production, which had grown as a proto-industry alongside papermaking throughout the early nineteenth century. These developments positioned Shimoina to enter the global silk market just as European producers experienced a blight on their silk crops which led to an increased demand for foreign exports of Japanese silk. The resulting intensification of silk production in Shimoina affected the social, economic, and political dynamics of the region. The sudden need for a larger low-cost wage labor force increased the in-migration of young women and girls from the surrounding countryside who worked for only half the wages of men. While Wigen emphasizes the importance of female labor to Shimoina's silk industry and the economic transformation of the region, she does not analyze the changing roles of female labor with regard to the exigencies of the family economy that created an environment where the market value of women's and girls' labor compared so unfavorably to the value of men's labor. Later, however, she does link the lack of labor activity after the turn of the century to the 1900 Peace Police Law which prohibited women from participating in all political activities. This interpretation contrasts with the preponderance of Japanese pre-

war labor literature which attributes labor quiescence in this period to the "docility" and "ignorance" of the large population of female textile workers.

In addition to the growing demand for cheap labor, the intensification of silk production in Shimoina also called for larger amounts of capital to develop the area's silk filatures. Just as changes within the workforce resulted in new social and demographic configurations in the region, these new demands for capital contributed to drastic changes in Shimoina's political landscape and ultimately to the peripheralization of the region with respect to the emerging national and provincial centers. Because the new demands for increased capital could not be met by the area's traditional elite class of wealthy agriculturalists and merchants, Shimoina industrialists and silk entrepreneurs looked outside the region for financing, turning to the state and to the increasingly dominant urban centers. This dependency accentuated the hierarchical relationship between Tokyo and localities such as Shimoina that had been initiated by the newly developing national finance system, the state's assumption of police functions throughout the country, and its sponsorship of a nationwide telegraph system. By the end of the nineteenth century, Tokyo and the new provincial capital of Nagano City dominated the financing of Shimoina's silk industry. The Meiji state's deflationary policies of the 1880s weakened local elites and made them more financially dependent on the center. Furthermore, in 1894 the Shimoina lobby lost its bid for a local station as part of the government-sponsored railroad under construction, dealing the final blow to Shimoina's status as a trade corridor between the interior and the coastal cities that were now so crucial for foreign trade. These developments made the region increasingly dependent on the national and provincial centers and signaled the decline of Shimoina as a fairly self-sufficient and diversified economic unit.

While Wigen's narrative of Shimoina is one of decline, she also notes that "while [the silk industry] turned the [Ina] valley into a clearly subordinate periphery of the Japanese state, that very subordination was critical to the contemporary Japanese state's ability to escape becoming a periphery of the global capitalist system." (p. 266) Thus, while providing one example of local peripheralization within Japan, Wigen also argues that the subordination of regions such as Shimoina to a strong central core was essential for Japan itself to avoid peripheralization, and in fact "to emerge as a new and privileged core within Asia." (p. 13) Shimoina, she claims, benefited from the lower prices of agricultural goods coming from Japan's new colonies, such as Taiwan and Korea, which allowed the region to concentrate on silk production. Thus the process of Japanese imperial expansion played a crucial role in Shimoina's transformation. Unfortunately, one of the weaknesses of a regional analysis such as this

is that it disallows a more detailed examination of the dynamics of imperialism and the specific ways in which the economic and human impact of those dynamics manifested themselves within Shimoina and Japan more generally.

Nonetheless, this book is one of few works in English examining economic change that attempts to traverse the Tokugawa/Meiji divide. This transition in Japanese history consists of a revolutionary movement from a feudal regime consisting of semiautonomous domains to a modern, centralized nation-state. *The Making of a Japanese Periphery* makes a key contribution with regard to comparative histories of similar transitions, as Wigen's book focuses on elucidating, through the lens of a particular regional analysis, the processes involved in the shift from an "early modern" to a "modern" society. Her findings allow for the questioning of assumptions common in European historiography about this shift that emphasize the prevalence of warfare, foreign trade, and political pluralism in creating the conditions necessary for modernization and industrialization. Wigen finds, in contrast to most European cases, that the features that distinguished this process in Tokugawa Japan included a lack of warfare, sanctions against foreign trade, and a highly centralized form of feudalism in which one ruler, the shogun, "intervene[d] precisely to enforce decentralization." (p. 98)

Wigen's successful use of a regional analysis to provide a coherent picture of the complicated transition from Japan's "early modern" to its "modern" era will hopefully inspire others to investigate the use of similar methodologies. Her willingness to engage with changes spanning the Tokugawa and Meiji eras sheds light on the processual nature of Japan's modern development, and her method contributes to our understanding of how geographical conceptualizations can add complexity to temporal analyses.

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Mary Nolan. *Visions of Modernity: American Business and the Modernization of Germany.* New York: Oxford University Press, 1994.

The economic modernization of German industry and the roles which Fordism and Americanism assumed in shaping this process during the Weimar Republic comprise the focus of *Visions of Modernity*. Although not the first work to examine how American economic models and thinking influenced German industrial reconstruction and development after the First World War, Nolan's is perhaps the most successful in explaining how Germany rationalized and modernized specific industries (mining, iron and steel, machine making) and segments of its society without substantially "Americanizing" them. She attributes the resulting and seemingly odd combination of economic modernity and cultural traditionalism to Germany's selective adoption of American economic theories and systems, which were then reshaped by conflicting political agendas, German traditions, and postwar conditions.

In the first half of her book, Nolan recounts the visions and debates which German observations of America produced after 1924. Interested in reviving a sagging postwar capitalist economy, industrialists, engineers, labor leaders, and Social Democrats looked to the United States for ways to transform German industry. All agreed that some degree of American-style modernization was necessary for economic renewal. As Nolan notes, America "provided a working version of modernity from which Germans could pick and choose...as they strove to imagine not an ideal future, but at least an updated one." (p. 9)

The auto industry stood out as the most prominent example of American economic modernity and prosperity. Beginning in 1924, Germans from diverse social and economic strata traveled to River Rouge and Highland Park to observe and study Fordism and Americanism at work. Nolan shows that most of these Germans had already begun their study of Fordism at home after 1923 when Henry Ford's autobiography, *My Life and Work*, appeared in German translation. By the end of the decade the book had sold over 200,000 copies and had been extensively reviewed and critiqued in daily newspapers, popular journals, and trade publications.

Ford employed new production methods such as the assembly line and standardization to rationalize his factories and increase productivity and profits. He achieved these goals in spite of raising wages to an unheard of five dollars per day and decreasing the work week. He also implemented the installment plan as a means of mass marketing his products among eager consumers. Sustained productivity and profits, Ford asserted, could only be maintained by encouraging mass consumption and leisure. For many Germans, Fordism provided the

best example of the benefits of rationalized industry; for others, it represented Americanism at both its best (prosperity, leisure, consumer goods) and worst (materialism, uniformity, dehumanized labor, democratized consumption).

Deciding which aspects of Americanism were responsible for America's prosperity, and determining the extent to which these elements could and should be imported to Germany, sparked heated debates amongst industrialists, engineers, and Social Democrats. From their separate vantage points, each argued for a specific appropriation of Americanism and charted their own preferred course for German rationalization and capitalism. Nolan eloquently reconstructs these divisive debates and asserts that they contributed significantly to increased class conflict in the Weimar Republic. In spite of their distinct visions, however, all believed that fullscale emulation of Americanism was neither possible nor desirable.

Germany's reluctance stemmed from deep anxieties regarding modernity as well as from devoted adherence to traditional economic practices such as the employment of skilled labor and production of custom quality products. In order for industrialists, engineers, and trade unionists to more easily appropriate and implement crucial elements of Fordism and Americanism, they first had to "Germanicize" them. Thus, according to Nolan, modernizing Germans spoke in terms of "rationalization" instead of "Americanization."

How and to what extent Germany actually rationalized aspects of its economy and society without "Americanizing" them are questions addressed in the second half of Nolan's book. Concentrating on industries hard-hit by reparations and the Versailles Treaty, Nolan discusses the inherent problems selective appropriation produced. Here statistical charts and figures are employed to demonstrate how overall production rose in both the mining and the iron and steel industries. Since increased productivity was unaccompanied by other essential elements of Fordism, however, rationalization fell short of the many results desired by its diverse proponents. By the end of the decade, increased unemployment, overproduction, and limited profits began to cast widespread doubt on the wisdom of pursuing rationalization in Germany.

Nolan's final chapters are devoted to illustrating how right-wing industrialists and, to an even larger extent, engineers attempted to bolster the flagging movement while extending rationalization to the social realm. Both groups proposed and partially implemented vocational, educational, and social engineering programs which were targeted at workers and their families. These programs were designed to create a new working class that was modern in its work habits yet traditional in its willingness to obey authority, respect hierarchy, and work towards the good of the national economy instead of pursuing individual

gain. Such programs were heavily criticized by trade unionists and Social Democrats, but their protests proved largely ineffective. As a result, Nolan concludes that overall, "the economic visions of industrialists and social aims of engineers...shaped the contours of the rationalization movement in the mid and late 1920s more forcefully than the optimistic images of Americanism projected by Social Democrats. (p. 10)

Although the Great Depression dealt a heavy blow to the modernization movement in Germany after 1929, rationalization was not completely repudiated. Instead, its proponents on the German right insisted that it needed to assume a more uniquely German form in order to succeed. This new and more Germanicized form would be provided by the National Socialists after 1933.

Overall, Nolan successfully recounts the visions which Germans constructed of American life and production. However, due to the necessarily skewed sample of travel records, trade journals, and scholarly tomes that she uses to reconstruct these images, Nolan somewhat erroneously concludes that most Germans who traveled to America after 1924 remained east of the Mississippi River. A large number did, in fact, venture west to California and the Pacific Northwest to study other facets of rationalization and Americanism. Nevertheless, *Visions of Modernity* is well-researched and provides a deeper understanding of Americanism and the roles which it assumed in shaping both the economic modernization of Germany as well as the course of the Weimar Republic.

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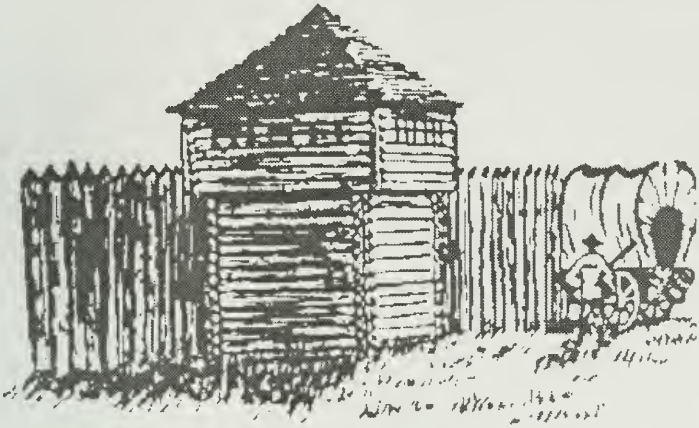

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